

January 25, 2013

**THE SARASOTA**

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*

**BIDS AND A GRANT**

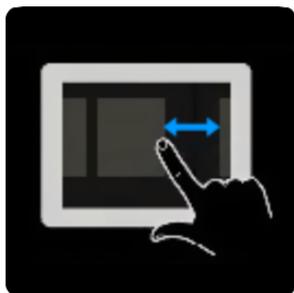
**SAFETY AFTER SANDY HOOK**

**COMMUNITY CELEBRATION**

*Inside*

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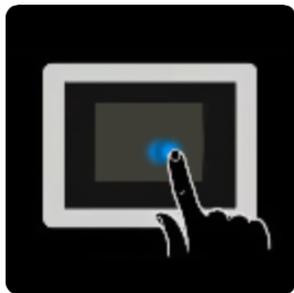
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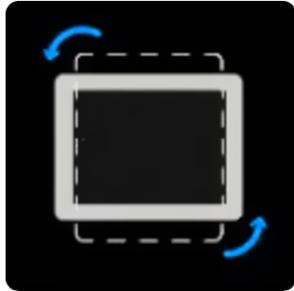
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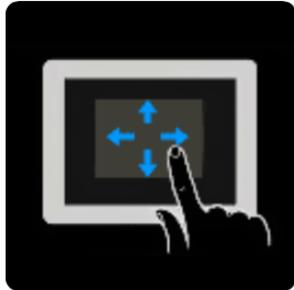
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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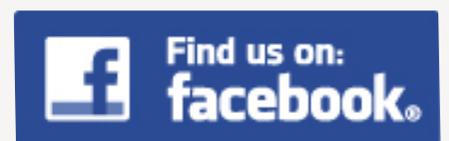
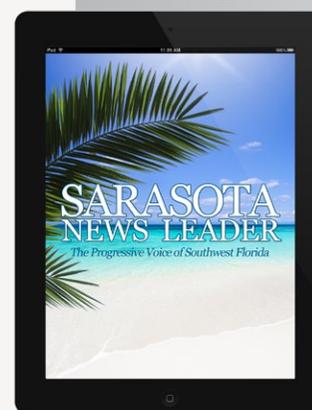
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# Welcome

All someone had to do this week to get a sense of the disparate topics of interest in the community was to attend the City Commission meeting. And that was just a taste of all the goings-on!

At the same time aerialist Nik Wallenda was seeking City Commission and Florida Department of Transportation approval for a new “skywalk,” Sarasota County officials were fretting over a lack of bids for a major stormwater project on Siesta Key — then worrying why a bid period extension netted prices about three times higher than staff had anticipated.

Stan Zimmerman not only made it to the City Commission meeting, of course; he also learned of the latest delay — thanks to the Planning Board — in the effort to create a North Trail Overlay District. As you will see, he spent a bit of time with the Downtown Improvement District folks on Tuesday, too.

Cooper Levey-Baker tells us all about the ribbon cutting he attended for the new King Stone Townhomes in north Sarasota. Then he donned his county reporter’s cap for an update on RE-STORE Act funds.

Scott Proffitt, like Stan, also had a long day on Tuesday, with School Board discussions ranging from security to fundraising for the original Sarasota High School’s transformation into the Sarasota Museum of Art.

On the lighter side, we also have managed to serve up a lot of diversity this week — from Fran Palmeri’s gorgeous photos of clouds and skies, with her usual poetic accompaniment, to a panel discussion on the arts and Sarasota, to Otus’ most in-depth installment yet on the birds’ half of the “birds and the bees.”

So much is going on in this issue, we truly encourage you to take your time in perusing it — and enjoying it.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher



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Front cover - Selby Gardens, Robert Hackney  
Sarasota Leisure - Ringling Bridge Run, Norman Schimmel

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER



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## BIDS AND A GRANT

*An extension of the bid period for the Siesta Key stormwater project nets three responses, but efforts continue to keep a water management district grant for the work — Rachel Brown Hackney*

Because only one company initially bid on the Siesta Key stormwater project by the due date of Jan. 9, the Sarasota County Procurement Department extended the deadline until Jan. 23 — action that netted three bids, *The Sarasota News Leader* learned this week.

However, the lowest of those bids was about \$4.3 million — almost three times the \$1.5 million expense county staff had estimated for the construction.

The county's chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., wrote the commissioners in an email late in the afternoon of Jan. 23, "I have asked staff to review the estimate work and determine why there was such a large discrepancy" between the bids and the estimate. "I am sure you will have questions. We don't have answers at this point, but I wanted you to be aware of current status." ([Full story here](#))



## SAFETY AFTER SANDY HOOK

*The Sarasota County School Board learns it may be stymied by a lack of funding resources as it seeks to enhance campus security — Scott Proffitt*

Although the Sarasota County School Board members this week affirmed their desire to make the county's schools as safe as possible in the wake of the Dec. 14 deaths of 20 students and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, they may be stymied by their budget in regard to any new measures.

Al Weidner, deputy chief financial officer, told the board members during a Jan. 22 workshop, "We are down to where we were 10 years ago" in terms of district revenue. "I'm not hearing anything real good," he added.

The Great Recession produced a decrease in funding for education both at the state and local levels, Weidner pointed out.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson reminded a group on Siesta Key last week that the county's tax base had declined about 40 percent as a result of the economic downturn.

What may be the deciding factor for plans to improve school security is whether voters will approve another renewal of the district's special 1 mill tax in 2014, district officials said. ([Full story here](#))





## COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

*New affordable housing project draws elected officials — Cooper Levey-Baker*

More than 100 Newtown residents, community leaders and elected officials gathered Wednesday, Jan. 23, to unveil a new 28-unit affordable housing complex, King Stone Townhomes, bringing to a close a phase of intense redevelopment sparked by a stimulus grant.

King Stone sits right on Martin Luther King Jr. Way, just east of Orange Avenue, and replaces the blighted Mediterranean apartment complex. The cream-colored, two-story construction is a joint project of the Sarasota Housing Authority and the Sarasota Housing Funding Corp., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliated with the Authority.

Dozens of neighbors, as well as employees of the companies who helped design and build the project, mingled in the King Stone parking lot Wednesday, snacking on barbecue and touring some of the units. Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell and Vice Mayor Willie Shaw were on hand, as were County Commissioners Carolyn Mason, Joe Barbetta and Charles Hines. Former Sarasota Vice Mayor Danny Bilyeu also attended, representing U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Sarasota. ([Full story here](#))



## PUTTING IT OFF

*The City Planning Board delays action this week on the 'NTOD,' an overlay district for part of the North Tamiami Trail — Stan Zimmerman*

The Tamiami Trail between downtown and the northern city limits probably has been the most studied area in the city. Any number of plans and schemes has been proposed for it in the past half century, but nothing seems to work.

The latest proposal comes after three years of work by the North Trail Redevelopment Partnership, a consortium of owners, neighbors, businesses and cultural institutions. “This process was not led by some high-priced, out-of-town consultant,” said City Planner Ryan Chapdelain. “It was led by local stakeholders.”

He was speaking to the Sarasota City Planning Board on Wednesday, Jan. 23, before its members opened a public hearing to take testimony on this latest plan – the North Trail Overlay District.

Despite three years of meetings over it, the plan got off to a rocky start with the Planning Board. Two major sticking points arose during the public comments portion of the session. The first was a lack of support by the four neighborhoods in the overlay area. The second was reluctance to move ahead with “administrative review” of developer’s plans. ([Full story here](#))



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## **THE STREETCAR NAMED 'DESIRE'**

*DID members hear discussions of the possibilities for economic growth resulting from the creation of a downtown circulator — Stan Zimmerman*

As part of a mobility study, the City of Sarasota is considering laying down rails for a streetcar route in and around downtown. On Tuesday, Jan. 22, the Downtown Improvement District members heard consultants say streetcars are more than just a way

to get around.

The streetcars are just one aspect of the study, which includes buses, bicycles, pedestrians and even baby buggies. But streetcars caught the district members' attention like nothing else.

"It's 20 percent about moving people and 80 percent about economic development," said downtown business owner Forrest Shaw. "Streetcars create transit corridors that attract development that creates a measurable return on investment."

Shaw is part of the Sarasota Streetcar Initiative, which has studied and promoted the idea for the past four years. It is a trendy idea. Fort Lauderdale is building a streetcar system, and Tampa's is in operation. ([Full story here](#))



## **PLEAS FOR PRESERVATION**

*The School Board agrees to take another look at saving part of the interior of a Paul Rudolph building at Sarasota High School — Rachel Brown Hackney*

The chairwoman of the Sarasota County School Board says district staff will work with representatives of local architectural firms and preservationists on a way to try to save at least part of the interior of a Paul Rudolph-designed building at Sarasota High

School.

Although School Board members said earlier this month they did not plan to accommodate requests to preserve the interior of the building, designed in 1958 by the world-renowned architect, Jane Goodwin told the approximately 60 people attending the Jan. 18 Convocation of Governments at Sarasota County Technical Institute that she had met on Jan. 15 with Sarasota Architectural Foundation board members and "discussed going back to the drawing board ..."

The discussion was not on the agenda for the convocation — which included representatives from all the county's municipalities and the County Commission — but three people who spoke during the public comments portion of the meeting pleaded with the School Board to save the interior of Building 4 at Sarasota High. ([Full story here](#))



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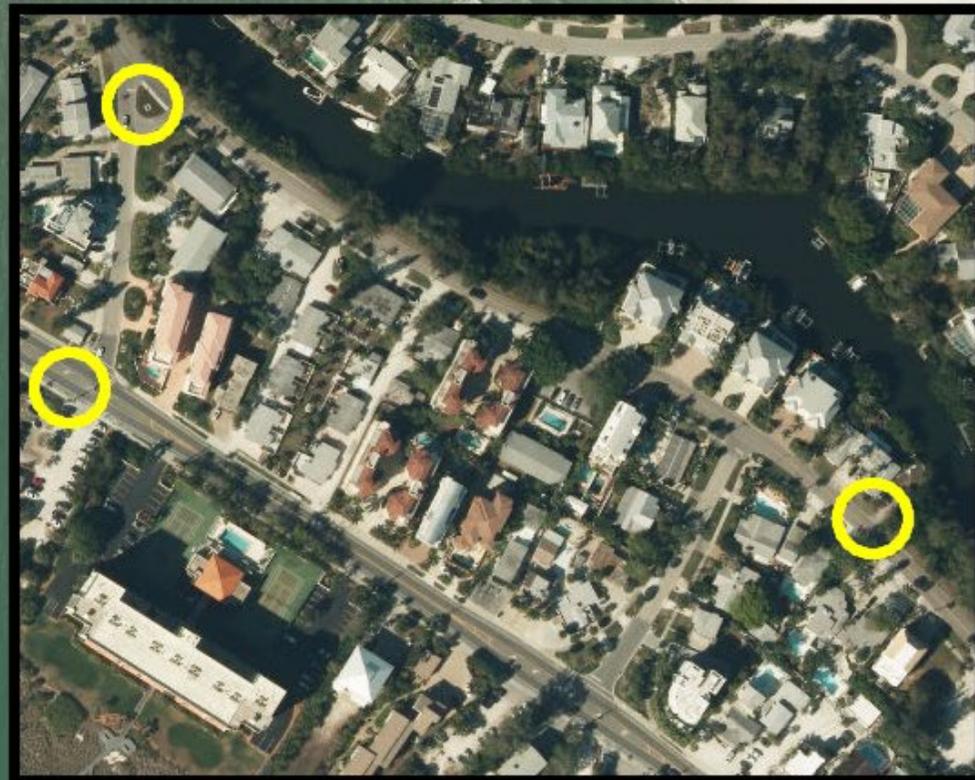


## Siesta Beach Park

# BIDS AND A GRANT

“*My math shows that even as originally projected before this decision, that the work will push close to Christmas. Could you let me know how this will be handled to avoid that issue and how quickly we can handle the new bids?*”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



2012

Aerial Imagery Provided by: Aerial Cartographics of America, Inc.  
Sarasota County, FL  
March 2012  
1" Resolution

N.A.D. 1983 HARN State Plane Florida West FIPS 0902 (U.S. Survey Feet)

*A graphic illustration shows the area where the new stormwater project will be constructed adjacent to Siesta Key Public Beach, with a pipeline running into the Gulf of Mexico. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## AN EXTENSION OF THE BID PERIOD FOR THE SIESTA KEY STORMWATER PROJECT NETS THREE RESPONSES, BUT EFFORTS CONTINUE TO KEEP A WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT GRANT FOR THE WORK

By Rachel Brown Hackney

*Editor*

Because only one company initially bid on the Siesta Key stormwater project by the due date of Jan. 9, the Sarasota County Procurement Department extended the deadline until Jan. 23 — action that netted three bids, *The Sarasota News Leader* learned this week.

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staff to review the estimate work and determine why there was such a large discrepancy" between the bids and the estimate. "I am sure you will have questions. We don't have answers at this point, but I wanted you to be aware of current status."

He added, "We will be providing a more [detailed] report in the coming days."

The bids will have to be verified in the first place before any recommendation about an award is made to the County Commission, Ted Coyman, the county's procurement official, told the *News Leader* this week.



*The stormwater project will be constructed in the area next to a field in the Siesta Public Beach Park that has been used by the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce for VIP parking during its July Fourth picnics. A Gulf & Bay Club condominium tower is at the far right. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

A capital projects update distributed to the Sarasota County Commission early on the morning of Jan. 18 raised concern about the status of the stormwater project, which already has been delayed a couple of years.

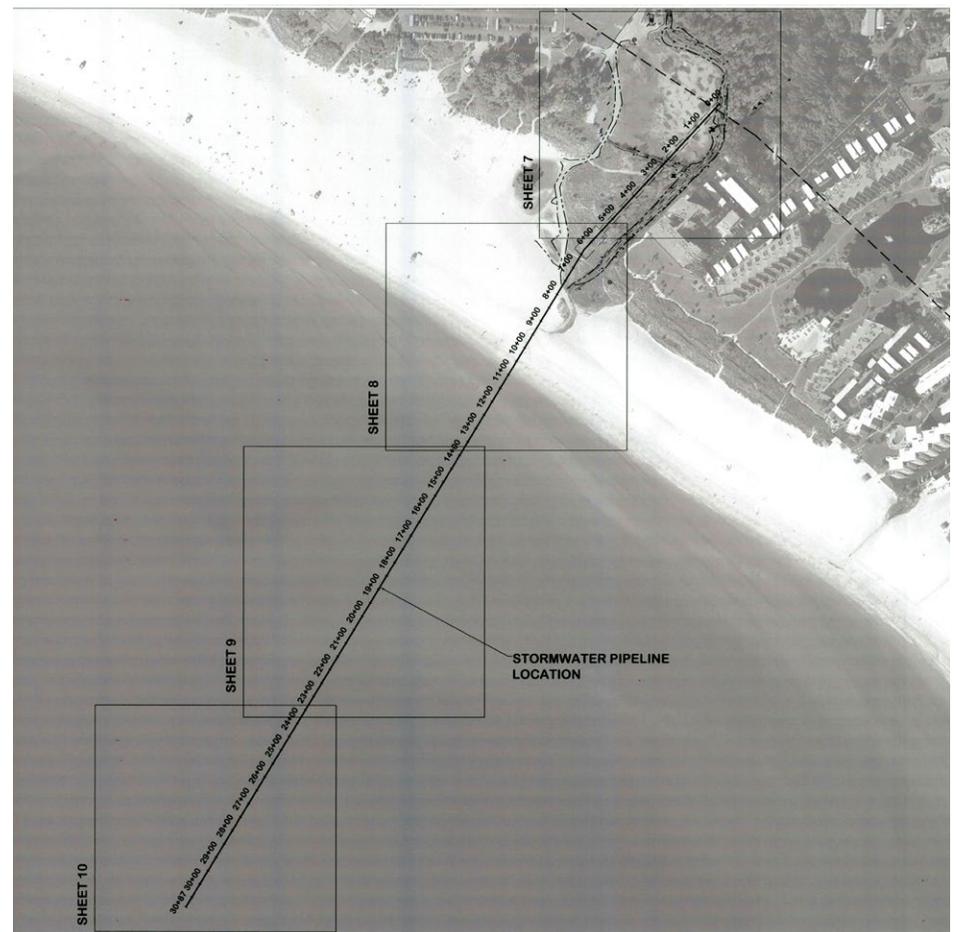
Under the heading, “Beach Road Drainage,” Harriott wrote that the Procurement Department had returned the single bid unopened to the firm seeking to undertake the stormwater project.

During a mandatory pre-bid meeting the Procurement Department hosted on Nov. 9, representatives from three firms were present: General Contracting Services of Placida, Mader Electric Motors of Fort Myers and the Meers Group of Rosebush, MI. None of them submitted bids that were opened this week.

Harriott added in his report, “Capital Projects is working with Procurement on the next course of action. The project is [partially] funded by [the Southwest Florida Water Management District] ... An extension on that grant will be required if the project is re-bid.”

With county offices closed on Jan. 21 for the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday, Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta Key — sent an email on Jan. 22 to Assistant County Administrator Tom Harmer, expressing concern about Harriott’s note. “It is supposedly from staff info a ... project [scheduled to take about 270 days] and was intended to begin a week after Easter,” she wrote.

“That timing is pretty important to the various tourist accommodations in that area,” Patterson added. “If we returned that one bid unopened, how do we know it was not a nice low bid from a qualified bidder? Since SWF-



*A graphic illustration prepared by Erickson Consulting Engineers of Sarasota in June 2012 shows details of plans for the construction of the stormwater pipeline into the Gulf of Mexico. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

WMD is involved we cannot even show local preference [for an interested contractor] and unless we can turn this around quickly you will not be able to start when planned.”

She also pointed out, “My math shows that even as originally projected before this decision, that the work will push close to Christmas. Could you let me know how this will be handled to avoid that issue and how quickly we can handle the new bids?”

Procurement Analyst Peter A. Boers told the *News Leader* the solicitation material for the stormwater project carried a clause saying that the county reserved the right to extend the bid period if it received no responses or just a single response.

One reason for returning the original bid unopened, he added, was to prevent that firm

from having its estimate exposed, so other firms could under-bid it.

Boers said he had talked with representatives of several firms since Jan. 9 and was hopeful other bids would come in.

The three bids the county received were opened at 2:30 p.m. Jan. 23. They were as follows:

- Gibbs & Register Inc. of Ocoee: \$4,251,633.30
- Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda: \$4,286,083.28
- Westra Construction Corp. of Palmetto: \$4,788,622.70

When asked about a county staff member's recent remark that it takes at least five weeks to get an item on the County Commission agenda, Coyman told the *News Leader*, "there's a lot of factors to consider" in that timing. He indicated that on critical issues, staff would be able to accelerate that timeline.

## THE GRANT QUESTION

SWFWMD has committed up to \$975,000 for the estimated \$1.5 million in construction costs, Project Manager Curtis Smith explained to the *News Leader* in 2012.

On Jan. 22, Carolyn Eastwood, who is supervising the project through the county's Public Works Department, told the *News Leader* the SWFWMD grant officially expires on March 31. "We've been in contact with SWFWMD" about the extension of the bid period, she added.

Staff remains hopeful the water management district will give the county a one-year extension on the grant, Eastwood said. However,

she added, "We don't have any of the documents yet from SWFWMD" to allow the county to apply formally for that extension. Smith was trying to expedite that process, she said.

The County Commission will have to vote to seek the extension, she pointed out, "so we're shooting for sometime in February" to appear before the board.

## A CLEAR NEED

On Jan. 15, Patterson told members of the Siesta Key Condominium Council about the importance of the stormwater project as a means of trying to prevent future beach closures, which had been linked to runoff causing high bacterial counts in the Gulf of Mexico.

Sarasota County Health Department guidelines regarding when "No Swim" advisories should be posted had become stricter over the past years, she noted. "On Siesta Key, [the swimming advisories] seemed to happen quite often."

Patterson also pointed out to the Condo Council members that the completion of the stormwater project "will take care of that brown stream and puddle you see" on Siesta Public Beach, where stormwater flows into the Gulf of Mexico.

The project design calls for a pipeline to carry ultraviolet-treated stormwater into the gulf.

A change in the location of the new stormwater pond — requested by board members of the Gulf & Bay Club condominium complex, which is adjacent to the construction site — and subsequent environmental review issues already had delayed the project, Patterson said. Nonetheless, it had been put out to bid, she noted, with the contract award expected in March. 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top, holding a large sandwich. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with lettuce, tomato, onion, and a dark meat patty. The woman's hands are visible on either side of the sandwich, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light color.

# This may take a while.

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## SAFETY AFTER SANDY HOOK

*The look of schools has changed in response to violent acts across the United States over the past couple of decades. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

### **THE SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD LEARNS IT MAY BE STYMIED BY A LACK OF FUNDING RESOURCES AS IT SEEKS TO ENHANCE CAMPUS SECURITY**

**By Scott Proffitt**

*Staff Writer*

Although the Sarasota County School Board members this week affirmed their desire to make the county's schools as safe as possible in the wake of the Dec. 14 deaths of 20 students and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, they may be stymied by their budget in regard to any new measures.

Al Weidner, deputy chief financial officer, told the board members during a Jan. 22 workshop, "We are down to where we were 10 years ago"

in terms of district revenue. "I'm not hearing anything real good," he added.

The Great Recession produced a decrease in funding for education both at the state and local levels, Weidner pointed out.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson reminded a group on Siesta Key last week that the county's tax base had declined about 40 percent as a result of the economic downturn.

What may be the deciding factor for plans to improve school security is whether voters will

approve another renewal of the district's special 1 mill tax in 2014, district officials said.

The tax first won voter support in 2002. At that time, School Board members touted the need for the additional funding to support arts education and other "extras" the regular budget could not fully cover.

"We take this very seriously," Sarasota County School Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin said in launching the school security discussion during the workshop. "We understand that you have concerns after Sandy Hook, as do we, and we want to make sure that you know that peace of mind and the safety of our children is of utmost importance to us all."

**“ We take this very seriously ...  
Peace of mind and the safety of our  
children is of utmost importance ...**

Jane Goodwin  
Chairwoman  
Sarasota County School Board

Board member Frank Kovach suggested armed security be provided at entry points to schools, and board member Caroline Zucker mentioned her concern about the cutbacks

in counseling and other such services in the schools, necessitated by the decline in revenue.

Kovach added that he felt the schools should have the type of controlled accesses found

in some jewelry stores, where a second door has been installed through which people have to be buzzed in by store employees.

Adam Lanza, the assailant at Sandy Hook, shot his way through a locked glass door to gain entry, so installation of bulletproof glass might be the next measure needed, Kovach said.



*Fencing surrounds the grounds at Bay Haven School for Basics Plus in north Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

During the workshop, Darrell Reyka, the district's director of school safety and security, presented a report on the status of safety in the county's public schools. He has been working on the issue for years, he pointed out.

Many of the measures taken in the district began over a decade ago in response to the Columbine High School shootings in Colorado and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Reyka noted.

In 2002, the Sarasota district hired National School Safety and Security Services to assess the safety of its facilities, Reyka explained. Representatives of the firm visited every school in the county to provide a comprehensive analysis of the level of its security.

The assessment, completed in 2003, reported, "Sarasota County has one of the best law enforcement/school partnerships in the country."

"They noted we had strong critical incident plans and a leadership team who reviews and monitors the schools' crisis intervention plan and training," said Reyka. "We have a strong relationship with our county Emergency Management program," he added. "We have continued with that relationship and have strong community support."

But as School Board member Carol Todd pointed out, and Reyka readily admitted, the study is 10 years old.

Reyka then noted that the National School Safety and Security Services undertook an informal, follow-up review in 2011 that was also favorable. That report said the firm's representatives were "astounded by the improvements made in security since 2003," he added.

Reyka pointed out that his department, which was created in response to the original report, has been busy overseeing the transformation of the public schools from the open-campus site plans of the past to monitored facilities with controlled access.

One of the weaknesses mentioned in the 2003 report was the need for better security camera systems and more sophisticated access controls.

"There are now more than 3,200 digital security cameras in use in Sarasota County Schools," Reyka said. "Control of delivery access, such as in cafeterias, has been tightened, with doors kept in a permanent locked state," he added.

The equipment consists of high-quality digital color cameras, which are monitored on site; image recordings also are maintained on site, he said.

School principals and law enforcement officers can access and view the tapes, Reyka pointed out; otherwise, they are inaccessible to the public.

For instance a subpoena would likely be required for access to the tapes, he said, to protect the privacy of students and employees.

Reyka also showed the board members slides of the gates and fences that have become common on the schools' grounds.

"Today we screen all visitors through a sexual predator/sexual offender database, and since 2005 all contractors and vendors are screened," Reyka added. 



## COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

*Sarasota Vice Mayor Willie Shaw (fourth from left) and Mayor Suzanne Atwell (fifth from left) are joined by representatives of the Sarasota Housing Authority, the Sarasota Housing Funding Corp. and Tandem Construction for the ribbon cutting at the King Stone Townhomes in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT DRAWS ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**  
*Associate Editor*

More than 100 Newtown residents, community leaders and elected officials gathered Wednesday, Jan. 23, to unveil a new 28-unit affordable housing complex, King Stone Townhomes, bringing to a close a phase of intense redevelopment sparked by a stimulus grant.

King Stone sits right on Martin Luther King Jr. Way, just east of Orange Avenue, and replaces the blighted Mediterranean apartment complex. The cream-colored, two-story construction is a joint project of the Sarasota Housing Authority and the Sarasota Housing

Funding Corp., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliated with the Authority.

Dozens of neighbors, as well as employees of the companies who helped design and build the project, mingled in the King Stone parking lot Wednesday, snacking on barbecue and touring some of the units. Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell and Vice Mayor Willie

Shaw were on hand, as were County Commissioners Carolyn Mason, Joe Barbetta and Charles Hines. Former Sarasota Vice Mayor Danny Bilyeu also at-

“ *This is a far cry from the Housing Authority I grew up with.* ”

Carolyn Mason  
Chairwoman  
County Commission

tended, representing U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Sarasota.

Authority Executive Director Bill Russell used the occasion to marvel at how far the organization has come since the federal government placed it in receivership seven years ago, when the Authority was a source of “embarrassment” for the community.

“The Housing Authority was financially troubled; our properties were physically troubled; the staff was untrained and disorganized,” Russell said, calling Sarasota housing conditions at that time “deplorable.” Today, residents see a “starkly different picture,” he added. The Authority now serves 2,100 families, 650 more than it did seven years ago.

Don Hadsell, the director of the Office of Housing and Community Development, recounted three years of intense action spurred by a \$23 million federal grant made available

through the stimulus law (a measure opposed by Buchanan). That money went to demolish the old Janie Poe complex and to build the first two phases of Janie’s Garden. It also went toward the new Robert L. Taylor Community Complex. Overall, the agency demolished 66 units, built 94 and rehabilitated another 68.

But the actual housing is only part of the picture, Hadsell said. He made a lot of promises to the federal government, but one major one to the Newtown community: He pledged to hire local workers.

“We kept that promise,” he said. “Local hiring was prominent on all of the major large projects. We established goals for local hiring and we met and exceeded those goals on each of those projects.”

Russell also cited the importance of neighborhood workers. More than 75 percent of the subcontractors hired by Tandem Construc-



*The new King Stone Townhome development is on Martin Luther King Jr. Way in north Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

tion, the firm that built King Stone, were local, and those subcontractors brought on 35 new workers from the Newtown ZIP code, including 12 Housing Authority residents.

Shaw echoed those numbers, thanking “GOD” (“Good Orderly Direction”), “LPW” (“local people working”) and “BPW” (“black people working”) for their efforts. Atwell said the new complex “figuratively and literally breaks down walls” and “levels the playing field for our entire community.”

After the speeches, attendees toured a couple of apartments. Mason examined the features of one second-story unit, checking out the brushed nickel faucet and gas range. “This is a far cry from the Housing Authority I grew up with,” she said, opening a microwave door. “Wood, not laminate,” she pointed out as she opened a cabinet.

Russell tells *The Sarasota News Leader* that the Authority is in the process of screening applicants for the units and that they should be filled within the next couple weeks. King Stone features one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, and while the federal government sets basic rent expectations based on local averages, rent will vary depending on the applicant’s income. Half the units will be set aside for needy families (those with incomes at 80 percent or less of the area median); the other half will support very needy families (those at 50 percent or below).

Vernice Harris, who worked for Tandem to build the complex, says the new building is gorgeous. “I had my apartment all laid out,” she says, “but I just can’t afford it.” She adds that rent runs \$600 to \$750, depending on the number of bedrooms.



*Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason checks out the kitchen appliances in one of the new King Stone townhomes. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker*

So what next? With the federal government’s \$23 million all spent, and the Authority’s reputation rehabilitated, what will the organization do for an encore?

“What we do depends on what funds we get,” Hadsell tells the *News Leader*. One major project remains unfinished: demolishing the final 60 units of Janie Poe, which still sit abandoned and decrepit along Central Avenue.

The Authority is in the middle of applying for tax credits through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, administered in the Sunshine State by the Florida Housing Finance Corp. The opportunity to finally tear down Janie Poe, and in the process erase the images of raw sewage in front yards made prevalent by the 2004 documentary *Condemned*, depends on winning those credits, Hadsell says. “It won’t happen without those.” 



## PUTTING IT OFF

*The City of Sarasota draft proposal for a new North Trail Overlay District includes an example of how a redeveloped street could appear. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

### **THE CITY PLANNING BOARD DELAYS ACTION THIS WEEK ON THE 'NTOD,' AN OVERLAY DISTRICT FOR PART OF THE NORTH TAMiami TRAIL**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Tamiami Trail between downtown and the northern city limits probably has been the most studied area in the city. Any number of plans and schemes has been proposed for it in the past half century, but nothing seems to work.

The latest proposal comes after three years of work by the North Trail Redevelopment Partnership, a consortium of owners, neighbors, businesses and cultural institutions. "This process was not led by some high-priced, out-of-town consultant," said City Planner Ryan Chapdelain. "It was led by local stakeholders."

He was speaking to the Sarasota City Planning Board on Wednesday, Jan. 23, before its members opened a public hearing to take

testimony on this latest plan – the North Trail Overlay District.

Despite three years of meetings over it, the plan got off to a rocky start with the Planning Board. Two major sticking points arose during the public comments portion of the session. The first was a lack of support by the four neighborhoods in the overlay area. The second was reluctance to move ahead with "administrative review" of developer's plans.

Mike LeShea offered stinging criticism of the plan. "This fails to achieve its own intentions. It does not represent the neighborhoods. Not one neighborhood has endorsed it. It will cut neighborhoods outside the planning process."

**“ I don't think we've had enough time. We should go off the schedule. And I hope the North Trail Redevelopment group will meet and consider some of our comments. ”**

Susan Chapman  
Member  
Sarasota Planning Board



LeShea has served on a variety of advisory boards and is a specialist in transportation.

The proposed overlay district would provide a different set of standards and guidelines intended to spur development in the area. It seeks both to streamline the approval process for projects and reduce conflicts regarding them. A developer would hold a mandatory community meeting on a proposal and then submit the plans to the city for approval.

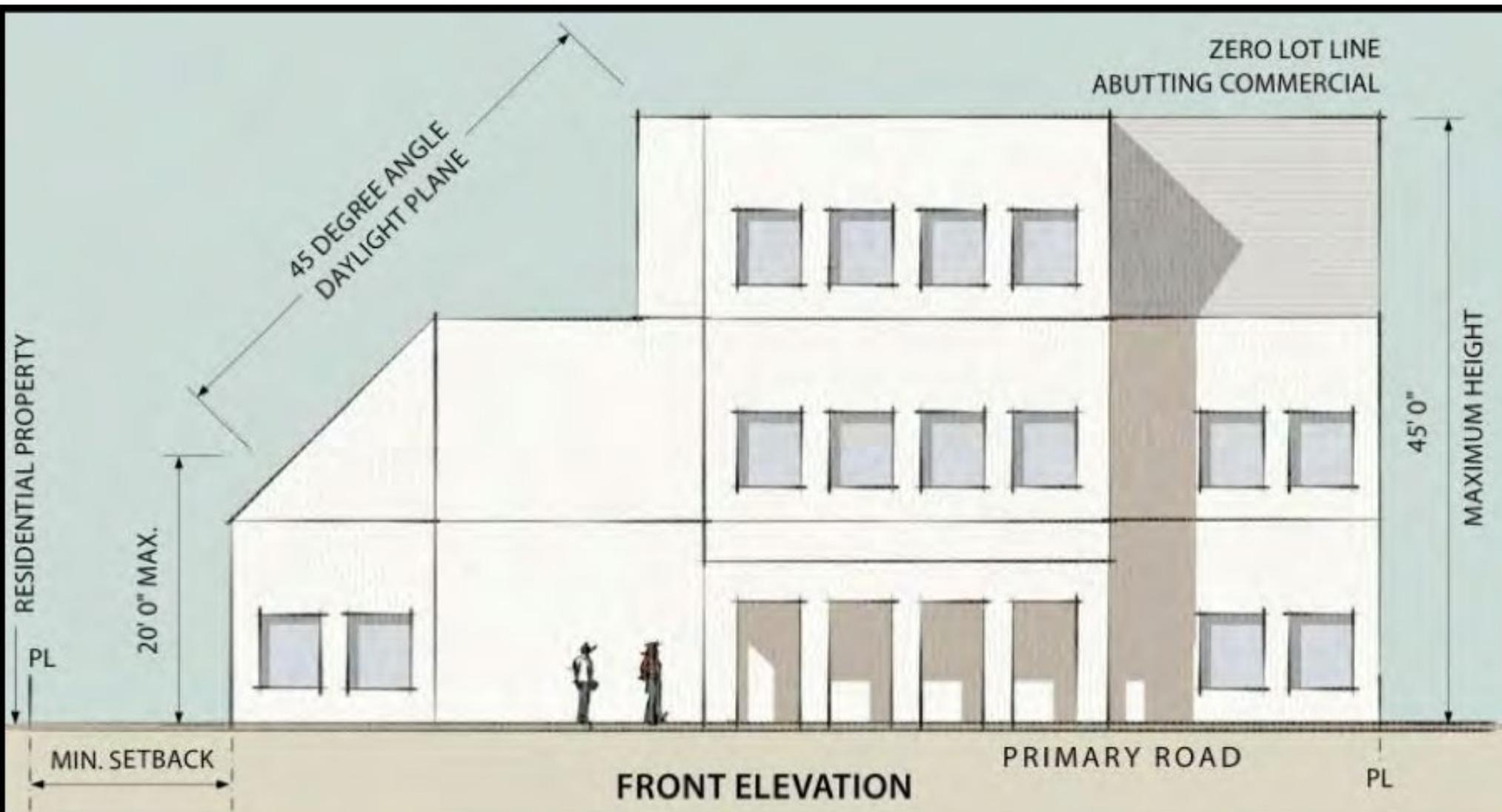
In most cases, no formal public hearing would be required either before the Planning Board or the City Commission — hence the term, “administrative approval.” But neighborhood residents are leery.

“I have many concerns about administrative site plan review,” said Gretchen Serrie. “I know at initial meetings, savvy developers

and their representatives reveal very little about their plans.”

Janet Robinson, a real estate broker who is on the board of the nonprofit North Trail Redevelopment Partnership, noted a dynamic tension that bedevils the area. “How do we make this the gateway to Sarasota, this little strip with a lot of great assets and really bad demographics?” she asked. “It is a dynamic place that is just stuck.”

Virtually all of Sarasota’s national-class assets are along the North Tamiami Trail — New College, Ringling College of Art and Design, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the Asolo/Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts and the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. By contrast, the South Tamiami Trail has strip malls.



*Developers would have more leeway with the daylight plane requirements for structures in the North Trail Overlay District. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

But the North Trail also has endemic prostitution and a drug-based commercial element fueled by burglary and robbery. By contrast, the South Trail is virtually crime-free.

## THE MAN BEHIND THE PLAN

Mike Taylor retired last year after 30 years in the City of Sarasota Planning Department. He is the actual author of the North Trail Overlay District. He came before the Planning Board Jan. 23 as a private citizen to offer his opinions and services. In a rare show of forbearance, the board gave Taylor unlimited time to speak.

“It offers developers an awful lot to get redevelopment going on the North Trail. Without that, you won’t see redevelopment,” said Taylor, specifying, “For example, administrative approval.”

He said if people — or even one person — are unhappy with the outcome of a review, they could file an appeal to the Planning Board after paying a \$1,500 fee.

Planning Board members barraged Taylor with questions. “There are tons of areas for discussion,” said Vald Svekis of the 82-page document.

But there is not tons of time.

The Sarasota City Commission set a timetable for staff to move the NTOD through the Planning Board and to a City Commission agenda in March. Planning Board member Chris Gallagher asked his colleagues how many questions they had about the overlay plan.

“At least 50,” said Svekis. “Me too, at least,” said Chairwoman Jennifer Ahern-Koch.

“Can we go off the schedule and take six months?” asked Chris Gallagher.

Member Susan Chapman said, “I don’t think we’ve had enough time. We should go off the schedule. And I hope the North Trail Redevelopment group will meet and consider some of our comments.”

The Planning Board members agreed to compile a list of their questions and send them to Chapdelain for review and possible answers. The board also agreed to continue its public hearing to Feb. 27.

Members of the public may submit their comments and questions as well via email to [planningboard@sarasotagov.com](mailto:planningboard@sarasotagov.com). 



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# THE STREETCAR NAMED 'DESIRE'

*In the not-too-distant future, a new streetcar or bus system might be offered in downtown Sarasota.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## DID MEMBERS HEAR DISCUSSIONS OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH RESULTING FROM THE CREATION OF A DOWNTOWN CIRCULATOR

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

As part of a mobility study, the City of Sarasota is considering laying down rails for a streetcar route in and around downtown. On Tuesday, Jan. 22, the Downtown Improvement District members heard consultants say streetcars are more than just a way to get around.

The streetcars are just one aspect of the study, which includes buses, bicycles, pedestrians and even baby buggies. But streetcars caught the district members' attention like nothing else.

"It's 20 percent about moving people and 80 percent about economic development," said downtown business owner Forrest Shaw. "Streetcars create transit corridors that attract development that creates a measurable return on investment."

“It's 20 percent about moving people and 80 percent about economic development.”

Forrest Shaw  
Business Owner  
Downtown Sarasota



Shaw is part of the Sarasota Streetcar Initiative, which has studied and promoted the idea for the past four years. It is a trendy idea. Fort Lauderdale is building a streetcar system, and Tampa's is in operation.

## Modern Streetcars

- Designed for modern urban environments
- Quiet operation
- Low-floor design
- \$3,500,000-\$4,500,000
- Portland, Seattle



## Replica Streetcars

- Historic aesthetics
- Modern drivetrain
- Improved reliability
- \$750,000-1,500,000
- Tampa, Little Rock



Consultant Michael English with Tindale-Oliver & Associates of Tampa laid out the basics. A fixed route can be run either by “rubber-tired vehicles” or a rail-mounted streetcar. The rubber-tire option — a bus or trolley — is vastly cheaper to install and slightly cheaper to operate. But because it is considered impermanent, it attracts far less development.

How much cheaper are the “rubber tire versions”?

English said Fort Lauderdale’s 3.5-mile streetcar system is costing \$150 million, or a bit less than \$50 million per mile. By contrast, a dedicated bus route serving the same area would cost \$1.4 million, including vehicles and stations.

In addition to the capital costs, streetcars are more expensive to operate. Consultant Evan Johnson said a rubber-tired bus system costs about \$68 per hour, while a streetcar takes about \$156 per hour to run.

“Economic development follows permanent streetcars,” said consultant Michael Chin. “We’ve seen it in city after city.” He cited Portland, OR’s \$148 million system. “It has generated billions in downtown development,” he said.

Much of the start-up money, perhaps 80 percent of it, could come from sources other than local property taxes. English said the Federal Transit Administration, the State of Florida, an available sales tax increase (with voter approval) and special assessments such as the one levied by the Downtown Improvement District can all be used.

“If you want it, you have to figure out how to pay for it,” said English. Operating costs, he added, are usually borne by farebox proceeds and local government budgets.

## HYBRID ALIGNMENTS AND OVERLAYS

Another trendy topic in urban planning is called “transit oriented development,” which argues that people find it desirable to live near mass transit. The “transit-shed” is figured to be 500 to 1,000 feet from the streetcar terminal.

Shaw offered an idea different from the one posed by the Tindale-Oliver consultants and drew a boundary 500 feet from its central point. His “transit-shed” covered downtown and the Rosemary District east to Payne Park. He said it could touch seven different city neighborhoods, plus the prime but undeveloped land of the Quay and Proscenium properties to the west. To the east, it would cover the School Avenue and the Ringling Publix property. He called it a hybrid alignment.

“It would be a 2.3 mile corridor with rails on a rubber bed,” said Shaw. “It would be \$4 million per mile for track, about \$1 million for the car barn and \$1 million for each of the three cars. The total would be \$20 million or less.”

Shaw’s suggested plan includes battery-powered streetcars, so there would be no requirement for overhead catenary connections for power. “And there could also be a possible offset by using solar power to charge the batteries,” he said.

Shaw provided a chart prepared by former Sarasota County planning guru Peter Katz. It showed the property tax potential of one acre of land. If that parcel is filled with single-family residences, the acre produces \$8,211 in property tax. If the acre is the site of a big-box store like a Walmart, it is worth \$8,374.

If it is populated by low-rise condominiums like those on South Palm Avenue, the value for tax purposes jumps to \$92,500. For a high-rise, multi-use building such as the complex at 1350 Main St. — with a mix of high-end commercial and residential units — the value in taxes is \$1.2 million.

Shaw proposed an “overlay district” for his “transit-shed” that would provide incentives for developers to build in the area. He suggested it could allow 200 dwelling units per acre, or four times the allowed density in the primary downtown area today. “Transit-oriented development would allow affordable housing in the downtown core,” he said. “With the current zoning, it’s nearly impossible to do that.”

## CONVERSATIONS STARTING

At a retreat late last year, the Sarasota City Commission set a goal of attracting new residents. City Manager Tom Barwin says he is interested in at least 100 new residents per year. But some are more ambitious than that.

Chief Planner Steve Stancel told the Downtown Improvement District members, “The City Commission is developing new goals

and looking at increasing density downtown. They’ve identified it as a strategy.”

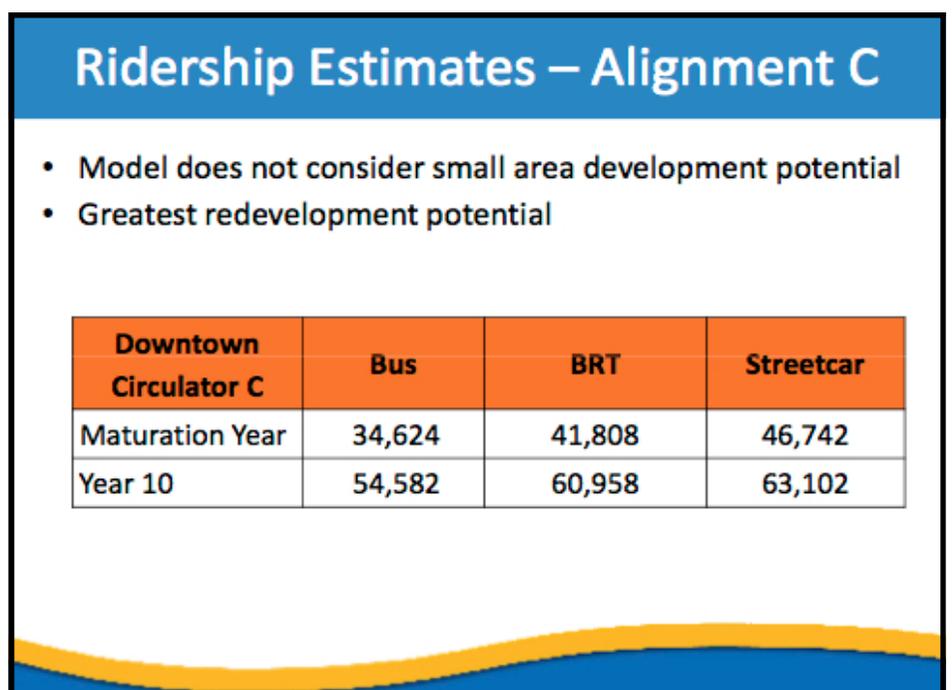
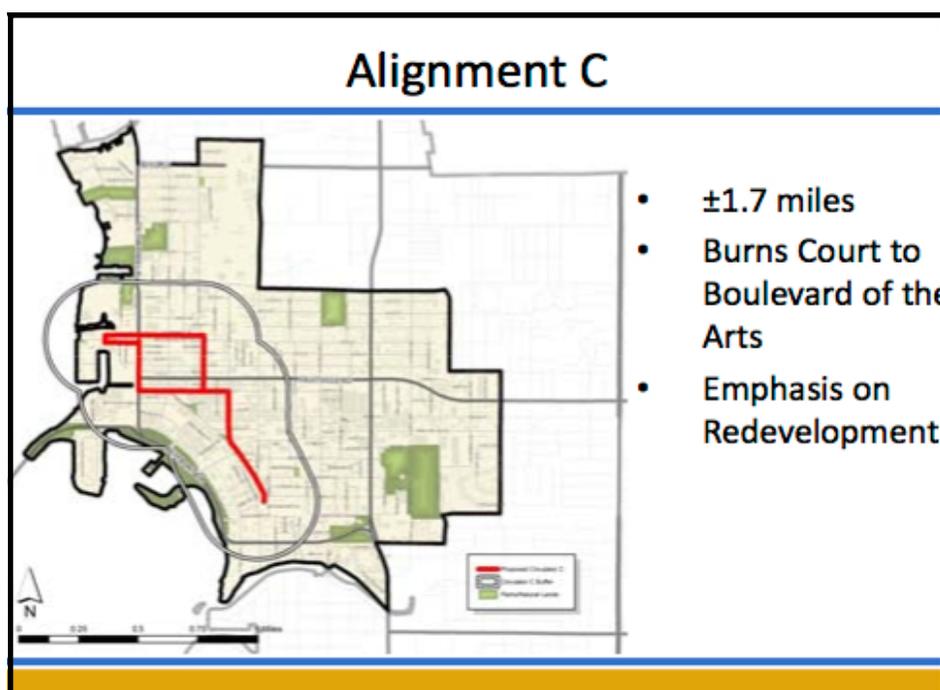
The district’s operations manager, John Moran, asked, “Should land use be merged into the transit [mobility] study?”

Shaw chimed in, “We recommend that. We’re looking at the hypothetical need for an overlay [district].”

Ironically, there was a Downtown Residential Overlay District (the DROD) that recently expired. Only hours after the district meeting, the Sarasota City Commission passed a zoning text amendment that deleted all reference to it in the city’s body of regulations and rules. But like a phoenix, as it dies, so it comes back.

Unlike most coastal Florida communities, Sarasota still has undeveloped land on or close to the water. Some is tied up in litigation or foreclosure proceedings. But there are already signs the “cranes” are coming back.

Tom Mannausa’s 18-story tower “The Jewel” at the corner of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue is about to break ground. Prices start at \$1.5 million for one of the 18 units. 



*The November 2012 downtown mobility study shows ridership estimates for one route proposed for downtown circulators. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*



## PLEAS FOR PRESERVATION

*The Paul Rudolph-designed Building No. 4 at Sarasota High School is on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **THE SCHOOL BOARD AGREES TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT SAVING PART OF THE INTERIOR OF A PAUL RUDOLPH BUILDING AT SARASOTA HIGH SCHOOL**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

The chairwoman of the Sarasota County School Board says district staff will work with representatives of local architectural firms and preservationists on a way to try to save at least part of the interior of a Paul Rudolph-designed building at Sarasota High School.

Although School Board members said earlier this month they did not plan to accommodate requests to preserve the interior of the building, designed in 1958 by the world-renowned architect, Jane Goodwin told the approximately 60 people attending the Jan. 18 Convocation of Governments at Sarasota County Technical Institute that she had met on Jan. 15 with Sarasota Architectural Foundation board

members and “discussed going back to the drawing board ...”

The discussion was not on the agenda for the convocation — which included representatives from all the county’s municipalities and the County Commission — but three people who spoke during the public comments portion of the meeting pleaded with the School Board to save the interior of Building 4 at Sarasota High.

Architect Carl Abbott of Sarasota, who has been in practice about 46 years, pointed out that Building 4 “is one of the most important buildings in the South in terms of architectural integrity ...”

Abbott added, “The interior of the building is as integral a part of the building as the exterior itself.”

“The unique nature of the Rudolph structure demands and deserves special attention,” said SAF President Janet Minker, who added that she and her fellow board members had made numerous attempts to discuss that with district officials between June and November 2012.

“We were put off and told to trust the design team. We trusted and we waited,” Minker continued. When SAF members saw the interior plans, she said, “It was clear that trust and wait were not going to result in an appropriate rehabilitation of Building No. 4.”

Goodwin told the attendees, “I only saw the plans [for the renovations] in December myself.”

Abbott reminded the School Board members that at the conclusion of a district-sponsored charrette about the Sarasota High rebuilding plans, held in June 2012, local architects did join the other participants in supporting a recommendation about use of the existing facilities, including the Rudolph structures.

However, he said, they also had asked for preservation of interior features, such as a “floating staircase.”

Mark Smith, the school district’s director of construction services, told *The Sarasota News*



(From left) Mayor Jim Brown, Town Manager Dave Bullock and Vice Mayor Dave Brenner of Longboat Key listen to discussion during the Aug. 18 Convocation of Governments. Photo by Rachel Hackney

*Leader* that the design/development phase of the rebuild is scheduled to be completed in June, with construction set to start in July; the renovations tentatively are scheduled to be finished in December 2015.

## GUIDELINES AND PLANS

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out that the county's comprehensive plan calls for county government "to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and adaptively reuse significant historic resources" and to avoid adverse impacts to them.

Building No. 4 is on the National Register of Historic Places, he added. "The floating staircase is obviously a significant piece of the Rudolph design."

The National Register's own guidelines have a provision for schools, Barbetta added, referencing public comments made by John M. Dart of Adams and Reese law firm in Sarasota. Barbetta said that calls for "character-defining interior elements [to be] retained."

"So I implore you to abide by those things and not go in and gut this [building]," he added.

After Goodwin pointed out that the interior design plans were not as far along as speakers had indicated, Barbetta asked her if she would see to it that better communication ensued about the project in the future among her board and staff, the County Commission and its staff and the preservationists.

Goodwin said she would make certain of that. "We don't need a surprise," Barbetta told her.

At that point, Commissioner Nora Patterson interjected, "Frankly, the last thing I want to see happen is for us to butt heads with the School Board. There are so many things we need to work together on."

Nonetheless, Patterson said she, too, was concerned about the future of Building 4. "I know you are not going to be able to preserve all interior details that may or may not have significance," she told the School Board members. "But this one really appar-

ently does have great significance ... It may be, if you take another look, by turning classrooms around ... it might be possible to preserve the floating staircase."

Goodwin replied, "There are some limitations that we have with that building the way it's designed. We are adding glass panels back up" and redoing the roof.

Goodwin added that the underpinnings would have to be pulled up, too, because "part of that building is sinking."

"The floating staircase is a beautiful element," Goodwin said, "but it's also got issues with safety and security when you look at how it goes out to the rooms and the width of the hallway. So we are looking at maximizing that space, looking at putting science labs in there."



*The unique nature of the Rudolph structure demands and deserves special attention.*

Janet Minker  
President

Sarasota Architectural Foundation



She added that she could see both sides of the issue.

Then Sarasota City Commissioner Shannon Snyder pointed out that he had expertise in school security — he was with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office before he retired.

“I understand that you all have concern for our student safety,” he said, “and that modern building doesn't lend itself to that.”

Snyder added, “Perhaps we want to switch buildings.”

He pointed out that school district staff could contact Larry Thompson, president of the Ringling College of Art + Design, about putting the Sarasota Museum of Art in Building 4 and using the original 1928 Sarasota High

building on U.S. 41 — the planned home of the museum — as part of the rebuilt campus.

Scott Lempe, chief operating officer for the district, pointed out during a School Board meeting last summer that one big concern for the campus renovations was keeping students in a more confined area, away from the 1928 structure, to improve security.

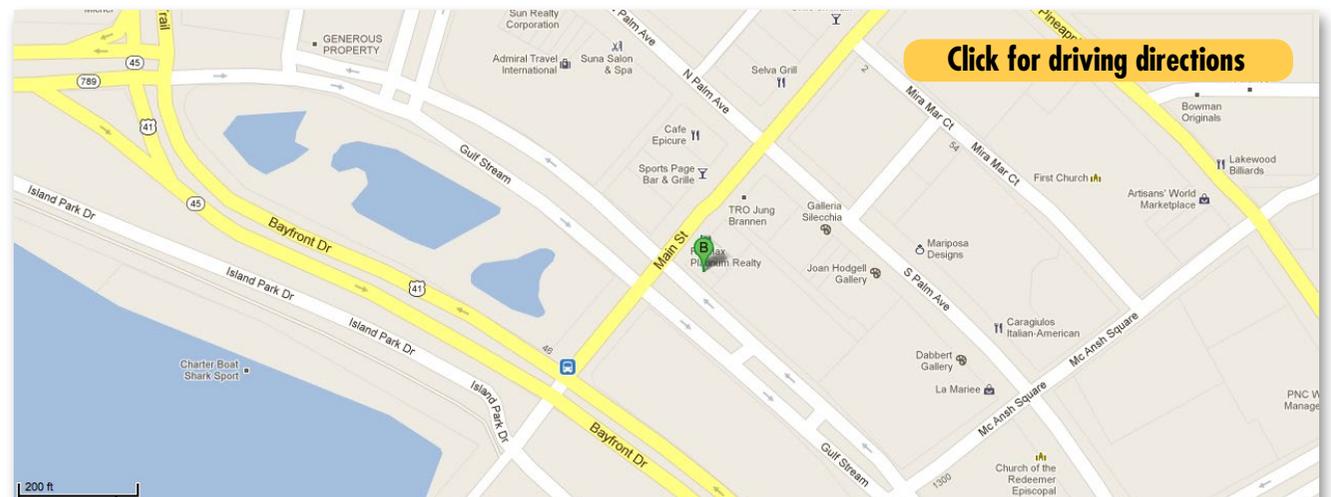
No one responded to Snyder's comments during the convocation.

Jim Brown, mayor of Longboat Key, also lent his support to preserving as much of the interior of Building 4 as possible. Noting he also is an architect, he added, “We talk about this [community] as a cultural area, and these are cultural things that need to be preserved.” 

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# A COOL \$1 MILLION

*A 2010 Deepwater Horizon flaring operation is under way. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Patrick Kelley, via Flickr*

## **SARASOTA COUNTY OFFICIALS LEARN THE AMOUNT THEY WILL RECEIVE FROM A SUBCONTRACTOR IN THE DEEPWATER HORIZON SETTLEMENT**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

A BP subcontractor will pay Sarasota County \$1 million over two years as part of a settlement between the federal government and the companies responsible for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Bipartisan federal legislation known as the RESTORE Act dictates that any penalties paid by companies involved in the spill — dubbed “[the worst environmental disaster](#)” in Amer-

ican history by President Obama — go to help Gulf Coast communities affected by the spill. BP is expected to pay anywhere from \$5 billion to \$20 billion in overall fines. Per RESTORE, that money is to be divvied up into a variety of pots, with some of it headed to Gulf states and some directly to local governments.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson, the board’s point person for everything RE-

STORE-related, circulated news Wednesday, Jan. 23, that the county is set to receive slightly more than \$1 million over two years from Transocean Deepwater Inc., a subcontractor on the Deepwater Horizon operation. The company was forced to pay \$1.4 billion in criminal and civil penalties as part of a settlement agreement reached earlier this year.

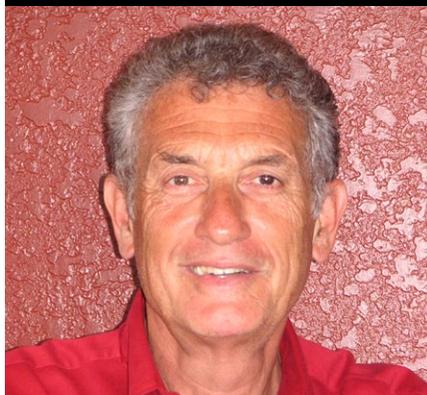
According to Patterson's email, it remains unclear exactly when the Transocean money will be paid out, and the sum is unrelated to any amount the county may receive through the consortium of Florida Gulf Coast counties it joined last year. That consortium was created to steer state BP money to the counties most affected by the spill.

Discussion about what to do with the Deepwater Horizon fines has centered mostly around environmental restoration, but Patterson has suggested the money could be used to fund tourism development as well. Since the county never saw the tar balls that clogged other Gulf beaches, the damage it suffered came mostly in the form of depressed tourism numbers.

One example of a potential project: the Nathan Benderson Park rowing facility. "It would be fabulous if it were possible to allocate some dollars to the rowing facility," Patterson told *The Sarasota News Leader* last October. 

"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." — *Jonathan Swift*

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## CITY COMMISSION ROUNDUP

*From left) Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County; Jennifer Mitchell, marketing director of Circus Sarasota; and internationally known aerialist Nik Wallenda appear before the City Commission on Jan. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **STOPPING THE AMPLIFIED MUSIC, BAYFRONT HIGH WIRE WALKING, RARE CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES AND DOGS ON LEASHES GET AN AIRING**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

Only in Sarasota, it seems, could a City Commission face such a radically diverse agenda.

In one day the commissioners decided to approve a high-wire walk (“I just want to get across U.S. 41.”), were told a rare architectural challenge is starting soon (“This is unique.”) and heard a promise to silence every note of amplified music downtown (“Your phones may be ringing off the hook.”).

#### **NIK VERSUS THE FDOT**

The ponderous Florida Department of Transportation is being asked to give its permission within a handful of days to allow Circus Sara-

sota — and international — star Nik Wallenda to walk a high wire across “its” highway — in this case, U.S. 41 at the bayfront.

It took the Sarasota City Commission only moments to give its permission, once the insurance issues were cleared up.

“I had a phone call from *The New York Times* ... asking if I was going to wear a tether,” he told them. “I’m going to ask you guys to do this without a tether.”

While City Manager Tom Barwin suggested a tether be a requirement for city approval, the City Commission ignored his recommendation and approved the stunt, providing that FDOT

gives its permission and Wallenda indemnifies the city in case of misfortune.

“I’ve performed over city streets,” said Wallenda. “Never have I worn a tether until that one time for ABC.” When the network televised his wire walk over Niagara Falls last summer, it demanded he wear the safety harness.

Wallenda’s downtown deed will be broadcast live, bringing an enormous number of eyeballs worldwide to the Sarasota skyline. He will walk a wire stretched between a bayfront condominium on Gulfstream Avenue to a construction crane on the west side of the Tamiami Trail.

“My guess is, it will be something in the neighborhood of 50 to 75 million media im-

pressions,” estimated Visit Sarasota County President Virginia Haley.

Wallenda planned the vista for maximum exposure of the city’s bayfront and Sarasota Bay in the late morning sunshine.

“This is about showcasing this city to the world,” he said. “The view is actually breathtaking.”

The event is planned for next Tuesday, Jan. 29, at 10:30 a.m.

## **CITY VERSUS MUSIC**

Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown put downtown on notice Tuesday. The “Noise Police” are back.

“We’ve been getting complaints from downtown over amplified music,” he said during his report to the City Commission.



*Internationally known aerialist Nik Wallenda walks a wire between the roof of One Watergate and the Ritz-Carlton in downtown Sarasota on Feb. 4, 2010. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

“We will be aggressively enforcing that [noise] ordinance and telling [violators] they need to turn off the amplification for outdoor sound,” said Brown. Looking at commissioners, he added, “Your phones may be ringing off the hook.”

Not everybody was happy to hear Brown’s warning. Civic stalwart Diana Hamilton spoke during the “open to the public” segment of the meeting about the consequences of the no-noise crusade.

“Every restaurant and a lot of little shops have outdoor speakers. It’s not loud or obnoxious. Why would we take an ordinance that hasn’t been enforced and enforce it? It makes us really look bad as a city.”

Diana Hamilton  
Sarasota resident

“Every restaurant and a lot of little shops have outdoor speakers. It’s not loud or obnoxious,” she said. “Why would we take an ordinance that hasn’t been enforced and enforce it? It makes us really look bad as a city.”

The city ordinance bans any amplified sound outside. Special permits are required for outdoor performances using such sound.

She asked, “Do we really want ... the only sound one hears when you sit outside [to be] leaf blowers and car horns? And people knocking on doors saying shut the music off?”

## TAKING THE TEMPERATURE OF ‘TALLY’

It is again time for Floridians to stock their bomb shelters: The legislative session will begin in March. Two of the city’s big problems have roots in Tallahassee, and the tea leaves for solutions are not good.

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo recently visited the state capital to attend a hearing

on pensions. The city faces a huge unfunded liability for the pension funds it manages, and the commissioner was hoping to tell a legislative committee about the city’s problem.

“Eleven of us were there. About two hours into the hearing, they told us only one of us could speak,” Caragiulo reported to his fellow city commissioners. “The mayor of Cocoa Beach spoke on the need for flexibility.”

As for any relief on the horizon: Caragiulo reported no bills have been introduced.

Meanwhile, a local judge’s smack down of the city’s no-smoking-on-public-property ordinance was based on a reading of state law, and that law does not look likely to change. City Attorney Bob Fournier said, “Ironically, the state prohibits smoking in some state parks but denies local governments the right to ban smoking in local parks. We need legislative action.”

Bills are in the hopper, but it is too early to predict their chances of passage.

## CROSS YOUR FINGERS

The structural failure of one of the first Sarasota high-rises built in the 1970s is about to see corrective action.

Dolphin Tower’s residents in June 2010 were evacuated because the building was in grave danger of collapse.

Since then a horde of professionals — engineers, lawyers and insurance people — have

wrangled over what to do. The city commissioners were told Tuesday that efforts would begin soon to rehabilitate the 14-story building. But the work will not be easy.

A concrete slab on the fourth floor failed, jeopardizing the entire structure. Most high-rise buildings depend on concrete columns stacked atop each other from the foundation

to the roof to carry their weight. Dolphin Tower was put together in a different way.

On the fourth floor, a slab “transferred” the stress to adjacent columns. “The transfer slab shifts forces between columns that don’t line up,” explained David Kerins of Kerins Engineering.

When the slab failed, there were 10 upper stories trying to balance on an unsupported



*Dolphin Tower residents have been in limbo since 2010, when major structural problems were discovered with the building in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

concrete slab. “The columns above and below tried to punch through,” he said. “Nobody’d seen anything like it.”

“We are going to take the entire [fourth floor slab] out and replace it with higher-strength materials and different geometry,” said Kerins.

But the solution does not end there. Higher stories had similar “transfer slab” problems; those will be addressed as well.

The building also is vulnerable to crosswinds in a tropical storm event. Kerins said it, too, would be strengthened for lateral resistance.

Dolphin Tower residents have been cagey — if not secretive — about the plight of their home, the engineering analysis, the cost of repairs and the amount of their insurance settlement. And they still are.

Work on the high-rise should begin in February. “We are building a giant steel truss inside the building. Then we jack and support a 10-story building while we take out the entire fourth floor. We have to hold up the entire building,” said Kerins.

“In terms of replacing an entire transfer deck, this is unique,” he said. “There will be a lot of attention in the engineering world.”

The people watching most closely, no doubt, will be the owners of the 116 units of Dolphin Towers.

## **KICK THE CAN, NOT THE DOG**

If dogs could count, they would be counting down the days they can run free in Payne Park. The city commissioners and even some dog owners think it is time to rein in the canines at the city’s signature park.

In the “new business” section of their agenda Tuesday, the commissioners talked not only about requiring leashes on dogs in Payne Park, but establishing a park for dogs nearby where the animals could run and cavort without leashes.

The commissioners were taken aback by current leash regulations in place for Gillespie, Arlington and Bayfront parks. Those allow a maximum 26-foot leash.

“That’s about from here to the back row,” said Parks General Manager Todd Kucharski, pointing to the rear of the City Commission chambers.

“So my 2-year-old granddaughter is in the back row and I’m holding the leash ... holding back a German shepherd?” asked Vice Mayor Willie Shaw.

Kucharski also noted the new circus-themed playground in Payne Park is being frequented by dogs. “Parents are concerned [that] fecal matter has been left,” he said.

City Commissioner Shannon Snyder came up with two possible locations for a dog park adjacent to Payne Park. One is the former city police station site, since razed to an empty field on Charles Ringling Boulevard. A second is the city property along U.S. 301 adjacent to Payne Park, the site of the former Scoreboard bar.

Public Works Director Doug Jeffcoat suggested all the issues — dog parks, leash length and Payne Park — be referred to the Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection Advisory Board. 



## CITY SIDEWALKS AND OTHER FEATURES

*City officials and downtown business owners continue to express concern about whether restaurants are allowing adequate space for pedestrians to maneuver around outside tables and umbrellas. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT MEMBERS TACKLE TOPICS SUCH AS THE REHABILITATION OF STOREFRONTS AND SHARING EVENT EXPENSES**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

The Downtown Improvement District members went into overtime for their Tuesday, Jan. 22, meeting, touching on a large number of small but important topics. In a nutshell, here is what caught their eyes.

#### **STOREFRONT REHAB**

Members considered restarting a program to help pay for rehabilitation of commercial storefronts in the downtown district.

“We could go 50/50 with the owners,” said DID member Tom Mannausa.

City of Sarasota Chief Planner Steve Stancel said the district could ask the City Commission to re-establish the program, which died for lack of funding. With the establishment of

the DID, an independent source of funding became available.

Member William Petty said a tenant had filled in a window in one of his historic buildings, adding that it would be helpful to get some assistance to return the structure to its original state.

“It would give more incentive to historic restoration,” said DID Operations Manager John Moran.

#### **REIMBURSEMENTS**

DID members balked at a request to reimburse the Downtown Sarasota Alliance (DSA) for half of the fees it paid to produce three events. “In the past they got the whole thing,” said Petty.

“It’s just not fair for the other organizations putting on events,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz. “I put on an event, and I didn’t get reimbursed. And what about the recent Thunder on the Bay? That raised \$3 million in income, and [the organizers] don’t get reimbursed.”

DID members agreed to examine the resolution providing for reimbursement. City Resolution 11R-2248 says, “[T]he City Commission resolves to redirect fifty percent (50%) of the Special Event permitting fees to the special self-taxing districts known as the Downtown Improvement District (DID) and the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID).”

Expenses range widely. For a small, one-day event, the fee is \$275. For a large three-day event, the tab is \$3,300.

There has been some tension recently between the all-volunteer DSA and the DID.

## SIDEWALK MATTERS

Sidewalk cleaning is becoming an issue, especially at restaurants. There will be a trial run of a new sidewalk scrubber capable of removing gum and grease in the near future, Moran said.

As city budgets tightened, sidewalk cleaning occurred less frequently; the DID has tried to take up some of the slack. The item will come up for discussion again at the next DID meeting, in early February.

Meanwhile, the battle over pedestrian walk-through of sidewalk restaurants remains an issue. “The rules aren’t being enforced the by city,” said Ritz. “The biggest problem is between the tips of the umbrellas.”

“There’s supposed to be five feet between the tables and chairs,” said Stancel. “This is one of those almost impossible-to-enforce regulations. Things are constantly moving out there.” 



*Questions have been raised about reimbursement of organizations for fees paid to host events such as Thunder by the Bay. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## THE FIRST OFFICIAL STEP

*Members of the Tourist Development Council discuss projects during their meeting on Jan. 17 in the county's 'Think Tank' in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **THE SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL VOTES TO RECOMMEND THE COUNTY SPEND \$1.178 MILLION FOR A WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS BID**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

On a unanimous vote, the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council recommended the County Commission spend \$1.178 million for Nathan Benderson Park's bid to host the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

Manatee County's Tourist Development Council will be asked to put in the same amount, Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, told the TDC members during their Jan. 17 meeting in Sarasota.

That Manatee advisory board will be meeting in a couple of weeks, Haley added.

For the current fiscal year, Haley said, \$245,000 will be needed to cover costs associated with the bid; the funds would come out of tourist promotion reserves totaling \$1,020,000. The

\$1.178 million would be paid over five years, she added, if Benderson Park wins the bid.

Paul Blacketter, executive director of planning for Bender-

“*The impression that we get is that this is basically ours to lose.*”

Paul Blacketter  
Executive Director for Planning  
Benderson Development Co.

son Development Co. — which has been building the rowing venue at the park — told the TDC members, “The impression that we get is that this [bid] is basically ours to lose.” [International and national rowing organizations] came to us and said, ‘We are ready for you guys to move forward and submit your bid.’”

US Rowing, the national governing body for the sport, and the International Federation of Rowing (FISA) “want to bring international rowing back to the United States,” Blackketter pointed out.

No international rowing competition has been held in the U.S. since the mid-1990s, he noted; yet, the United States has more rowers than all other nations combined.

“We are referred to, when we travel, as the United States delegation, the United States course,” Blackketter added.

Asked how soon Benderson Park would be able to host the World Championships again if it wins the 2017 bid, Blackketter respond-

ed that it probably would be about 10 years. However, he pointed out, assuming the park wins the bid, the international recognition could lead to its hosting a major championship every other year.

For example, he said, the Junior World Rowing Championships “is just as big” as the World Championships.

Already, he pointed out, FISA officials have said they would like to see the park host the World Cup Championships in 2016. That would be a trial run for the World Championships, Blackketter added.

## THE FINANCIALS

“So tell us how you’re going to pull off this whole thing, with our help, of course,” Commissioner Nora Patterson — who chairs the TDC — asked Blackketter.

Patterson was quick to note the county already had committed about \$20 million to the rowing venue at Benderson Park, located



*An architect's rendering shows plans for the rowing venue at Nathan Benderson Park off University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

off University Parkway, “with the word that that’s it.”

In her presentation, Haley pointed out that the World Championships would bring in 42,000 people, including about 1,200 athletes from 62 nations and 900 to 1,000 coaches and officials. The 10-day event would generate 40,000 hotel room nights in Sarasota and Manatee counties, she added, noting that the teams would arrive weeks ahead of time to train.

Additionally, Haley emphasized, “This is coming when tourism is at its absolute lowest.” Although the county tourism and Benderson officials would negotiate with FISA regarding the exact dates, she said, “we’re looking at mid to late September, so it’s when we really, really need the business.”

Regarding the expenses, Haley said that along with the bid fees, the counties would need to send delegations to international events to make presentations, and they would have to host FISA officials for a site inspection.

Blacketter said he was hopeful the latter visit would occur in April, when Benderson Park would be hosting a regatta.

On Feb. 28, Blacketter said, the first draft of the bid submittal is due. In March and June, a local delegation would travel abroad to talk with rowing officials from other countries about its effort to win the World Championships.

The final bid would be submitted in May, he said, with the bid award coming in September.

Haley pointed out that part of the financial commitment involves setting aside a maximum of \$775,000 for the television broadcast of the Championships.

The hope would be that a TV production company would purchase the rights to show the events, Haley added.

“In reality, rowing is not a top television viewership event,” she said. “It will be likely we’ll have to cover some of these costs.”



*During a regional regatta at Benderson Park in April 2012, spectators fill the banks of the lake to watch the events. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Longboat Key Vice Mayor Dave Brenner suggested Haley and Blackketter contact ESPN basketball analyst Dick Vitale, who lives in Sarasota County, to seek his help in arranging talks with ESPN. Brenner pointed out that the sports cable network needs constant programming, so it might be interested in the rowing championships.

“It is incredible,” Brenner said of the opportunity for Sarasota and Manatee counties to host the event.

## FACILITIES UPDATE

Already, Blackketter told the TDC, work is six months ahead of schedule on the park’s rowing facilities. The goal is to have most of the permanent structures in place by March 2015.

Beyond that, Benderson executives estimate it will cost \$5 million to complete the Phase III work. State financial support will be sought again this year, he pointed out.

Last year, the company won \$5 million from the Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott for the rowing venue work.

Phase III includes the starting tower, timing huts, installation of audio/visual systems and a regatta navy to transport referees and provide safety support to the rowing teams, Blackketter noted.

“We feel very confident that we will complete this,” he said.

Beyond that, Blackketter added, plans call for the construction of a community boathouse, which could be rented out for all sorts of events, to generate income to make the venue self-supporting.

Regarding Phase III infrastructure, Blackketter provided specific cost estimates. Among them are the following:

- Regatta Island water and sewer and electrical systems: \$800,000.
- Finishing towers with timing mechanisms: Three are needed at a cost of \$40,000 each.
- A starting line tower and timing huts: \$80,000.
- A three-story tower at the finish line that would contain timing equipment and provide space for the referees and the news media: A basic structure would be \$800,000. However, Blackketter said, the goal is to expand the initial facility to make it capable of multiple uses. The expanded version would cost up to \$2 million.
- A starting line platform with all the necessary precision timing apparatuses: \$375,000.

As for a grandstand: Blackketter said he had found in his visits to rowing venues around the world that “the biggest mistake is that they are not adequately shaded.”

If the park cannot afford a permanent structure with sufficient shade at the outset, he noted, staff would work with contractors to put up temporary covered facilities.

“It’s pretty impressive, isn’t it,” Patterson said to her fellow TDC members after Blackketter completed his presentation.

They nodded agreement.

“Thank you to the TDC,” Haley said. The Jan. 17 vote, she pointed out, was “the first official step” to winning the bid. 



More than \$15 million has been raised so far to create the Sarasota Museum of Art (SMOA) in the original 1928 Sarasota High School building.

That was the news this week from Larry Thompson, president of Ringling College of Art and Design, and Wendy Surkis, the president of SMOA, who appeared before the Sarasota County School Board with an update on that project and a sculpture under way at the museum site.

“The first of the obstacles was the need to raise \$22 million before we can really start the restoration of the high school. ... We are roughly at \$15.5 [million] right now,” Thompson told the board, turning to Surkis for confirmation.

“Fifteen million, five hundred twenty seven thousand, five hundred and fifteen dollars and 85 cents.” Sirkus interjected off the top of her head.

Thompson praised the work and devotion of Surkis as he addressed the board during its Jan. 22 workshop.

“Raising that money in this economy is quite impressive,” said Jane Goodwin, the School Board chairwoman.

“I often get the question, and you might, too, as to why don’t we start construction,” Thompson continued. “The reason is, the \$22 million is made up of about \$14 million for the actual refurbishing of the high school, and \$8 million is for the endowment for the actual



*Sculptor Patrick Dougherty's Stickworks is expected to be completed by Jan. 26 at the site of the Sarasota Museum of Art. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

operation of the museum. We can't start construction until we have the funds to maintain and operate the facility."

"A lot of times there's some confusion as to what's going to go on there," he pointed out. "A major attraction will be the Sarasota Museum of Art, which will be a modern contemporary art museum located on the second floor of the facility. But on the first floor and the third floor will be community educational facilities, art classes for children, adults, community classes ... so it will be a visual arts center," he added.

The college is moving forward on hiring an architecture firm to develop plans for the mu-

seum, he noted. "That's how confident we are in the fundraising."

Surkus then discussed the *Stickworks* sculpture by artist Patrick Dougherty, which is being created in front of the future museum on the North Tamiami Trail.

"We have about 130 community members who are helping to build that structure," Surkis said. "This is

phenomenal. It's become an attraction and a destination already," Surkis added, noting the sculpture will be completed Saturday, Jan. 26.

It will be kept on the site until it starts deteriorating, over the next year or 18 months, she pointed out. 

 *This is phenomenal. It's become an attraction and a destination already.*

Wendy Surkis  
President  
Sarasota Museum of Art



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## FIGHTING FISH KILLS AND TRASH

*A field used for special event parking at Siesta Public Beach recently has been a staging area for dead fish cleanups. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL RECOMMENDS THE COUNTY COMMISSION KEEP FUNNELING EXTRA TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE INTO BEACH MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

With recent fish kills linked to red tide offshore and concerns about an inability to ban smoking in public places, the members of the Tourist Development Council did not hesitate to lend their unanimous support last week to keeping extra county funds flowing to beach maintenance.

A presentation by Parks and Recreation Department staff during the TDC's Jan. 17 meeting reminded

the advisory committee members that 20 percent of the proceeds from the first extra penny of the Tourist Development Tax — which went into effect on April 1, 1997 — has been

used for county beach maintenance for the past two years.

The TDT revenue is divvied up into different accounts according to formulae established by county policy.

**“ We don't make the headlines for emptying a trash can or cleaning a restroom, but, certainly, if that service is not provided, that's when we'll make the headlines. ”**

Edward Exner  
Manager of Horticulture Services  
Sarasota County



The extra beach maintenance money used to go into a beach renourishment fund. The County Commission first authorized the change in allocation in Fiscal Year 2010. That decision is up for review as part of the FY 2014 budget process, which will begin in February.

Doreen Buonpastore in the county's Office of Financial Planning told the TDC members that the FY 2013 budget anticipates \$523,000 from the tax proceeds to be used for beach maintenance.

"We don't make the headlines for emptying a trash can or cleaning a restroom," Edward Exner, manager of horticulture services for the county, added, "but, certainly, if that service is not provided, that's when we'll make the headlines."

He pointed out that the additional maintenance funding had been a factor in Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman — aka Dr. Beach — naming Siesta Key Public Beach No. 1 in the nation just before Memorial Day weekend in 2011. The funding has paid for 21,000 hours of contractual work, the equivalent of 12 extra full-time staff members, he added.

The money also enables county staff to provide support for events on the beaches, Exner noted.

Referring to the earlier comment about beach renourishment money, Commissioner Nora Patterson, who chairs the TDC, pointed out that funds still are allocated from Tourist Development Tax revenue for beach renourishment.



## Loss of Funding Impacts

- Loss of contractual staff to collect trash and clean restrooms from 2:00 – 10:00 pm as well as some weekend shifts
- Loss of protection initiatives
- Loss of human resources and support of events such as the Crystal Sands Sand sculpture event, Beach University, Beach Volleyball Tournaments, Volunteer Coordination (Beach Ambassadors)
- Loss of vehicles needed for maintenance operations

*A chart from a Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department presentation shows the impacts of losing extra revenue that has been allocated for beach maintenance over the past couple of years. Chart courtesy Sarasota County*

Buonpastore said that latter account receives about \$1.5 million annually out of TDT revenue.

As of the end of FY 2012, Buonpastore added, the beach renourishment fund had \$12.7 million. Thanks to the annual allocations, she noted, plus money coming back to the county from a legal settlement over investment funds, the renourishment account should have about \$15 million by the end of FY 2013.

“There is a pretty extensive renourishment of Turtle Beach [on south Siesta Key] coming up,” Patterson noted.

Additionally, the City of Sarasota is looking toward another renourishment of Lido Beach in a couple of years, Patterson said — “if not earlier.”

In response to a question from Patterson, Laird Wreford, the county’s coastal resource

es manager, said, “At this time, that’s pretty much all that we are going to be able to foresee” in terms of renourishment projects.

Patterson told members of the Siesta Key Condominium Council at their Jan. 15 meeting that the Turtle Beach renourishment is expected to get under way in about two years at an estimated cost of \$11 million, part of which will be paid by property owners along the beach.

“I know that you do a really excellent job with the public beaches,” Patterson told the Parks and Recreation group, adding that their work includes cleaning up dead fish.

A Sarasota County news release issued on Jan. 18 pointed out that county employees were going to be assisted by people in the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Offenders Work Program to remove dead fish from county-owned beaches that day and on Jan. 19.



*Commissioner Nora Patterson/Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The release quoted George Tatge, the county's parks and recreation manager: "Communities all along the Gulf Coast, from Charlotte County northward, are experiencing some impact from this large red tide bloom in the Gulf of Mexico."

During the TDC meeting, Tatge explained that county policy allows staff to clean up the wet sand areas of the beach — between the highest wrack line and the low tide line — but cleaning is limited to areas workers can access. (The wrack line is the area marked by seagrass and microscopic sea creatures washed onto a beach by the tide. It is known as a source of food for beach-nesting birds.) Generally, he added, those are the same areas to which the public readily has access.

"Once in a while in a storm, you get dead fish way up on the beach, and I gather you guys don't feel like you can go up there" and clean private property, Patterson said.

In such cases, Tatge replied, Parks and Recreation staff seeks guidance from the County Commission and the Health Department.

Patterson said the County Commission had asked County Administrator Randall Reid to schedule a public discussion in the coming weeks about the policy.

## THE SMOKING ISSUE

TDC member Edward Braunlich, the resort manager at the Hyatt Siesta Key Beach, thanked the Parks and Recreation staff members for their work, adding that the Hyatt staff had been cleaning up Turtle Beach on a regular basis over the past three years as part of volunteer initiative with the county.

"I was amazed at how many cigarette butts" were on the beach, he added.

The cigarette debris problem diminished greatly when the County Commission banned smoking on the public beaches in 2007, Patterson pointed out. "And now apparently state law won't permit that and we are going to do our best to get that changed," she said.

The commissioners learned early this month that a 12th Judicial Circuit Court ruling in December on a City of Sarasota case would prevent them from enforcing that ban.

On Jan. 19, Marsha Hosack, the county's manager of intergovernmental relations, sent the commissioners an email saying that the latest newsletter from the Florida Association of Counties mentioned that House Bill 141 had been filed to allow local governments to restrict smoking on their properties.

That bill had since been withdrawn, she added. However, the staff of state Rep. Bill Hager, R-Delray Beach, had confirmed he planned to introduce such a bill.

In the meantime, she added, state Sen. Rob Bradley of Orange Park had filed Senate Bill 258, "which also would permit local governments to restrict smoking on their properties. We've been speaking with our delegation members to ask that they sign on and support the legislation. Those seen to date are supportive and I have additional appointments next week."

Bradley's bill, filed on Jan. 17, was referred to the Regulated Industries, Health Policy and Community Affairs committees, according to Bradley's Senate [website](#). 



*Three juveniles have been charged with vandalism to the public restrooms at Payne Park, the popular recreation area in downtown Sarasota. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

## **PAYNE PARK VANDALS ARRESTED, CHARGED**

Three juveniles have been charged with doing more than \$1,000 in damage to the public restrooms at Payne Park, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

A 14-year-old, a 17-year-old and a 12-year-old were charged with Criminal Mischief. Florida law prevents identification of youthful offenders.

After they were contacted by the Sarasota Police Department, the parents of the juveniles agreed to allow officers to interview the youths, according to a report. The three juveniles all identified each other as having been present and participants in the vandalism, a report says.

The 17-year-old and the 14-year-old had charges deferred based upon their decision to participate in the Intensive Delinquency

Diversion Service, according to the report. If they complete the program successfully, they will avoid prosecution.

The third juvenile, the 12-year-old, was scheduled for trial on Dec. 6 but entered a plea. A restitution hearing is set for Jan. 28, the report notes.

The bathrooms have been out of service since Aug. 21, when the porcelain fixtures were smashed. The city is replacing them with “industrial fixtures” made of metal, similar to the ones installed at Fredd Atkins Park, as well as in jails and prisons.

The investigation was conducted by Sarasota police Officer J. Smith and Detective Nixon.

*Stan Zimmerman*

## TEXCELLENCE DONATES ITS 6,000TH COMPUTER

When Brandon Contino received the note from the principal's office, he was thrilled to find out he was eligible for a home computer, he says.

The Brookside Middle School seventh-grader needed a computer and Internet access for homework and to read his social studies textbook, which are now online. But the equipment cost was out of reach for his family, so his mother contacted the Education Foundation's Texcellence program manager, Michelle Frau.

"It was Tuesday, and Michelle responded right away and asked if we could come Thursday night," said Rebecca Ratigan, Brandon's mom, in an Education Foundation news release. "We said, 'Absolutely. We'll be there!' That's when I found out we were the 6,000th family to sign up for a Texcellence computer."

More than 75 other families were at Riverview High School on that recent evening, applauding Ratigan, Brandon and his dad, Eddie Contino, the release adds. The students were from public schools all over Sarasota Coun-



*(From left) Eddie Contino; seventh-grader Brandon Contino; and Brandon's mother, Rebecca Ratigan, celebrate their having received computer No. 6000 with Texcellence volunteer Jonathan Swift. Swift's company and family have supported the home computer donation program since 2007. Photo courtesy of the Education Foundation*

ty, there to attend a three-hour Texcellence training session with parents, grandparents and siblings. They were all ready to learn how to attach a keyboard to a CPU, practice using educational and office productivity software and to pick up their very own home computer, the release points out.

Since the spring of 2007, 6,005 families have received refurbished home computers, training and technical support through the Texcellence program, the release adds.

Some students interpreted for parents and demonstrated their computer skills while Texcellence trainers led two-hour workshops in English and Spanish. All left with clean computers and monitors, flash drives and phone numbers for ongoing technical support, the release points out.

This collaboration between the Education Foundation and Sarasota County Schools is made possible by support from The William G. and Marie Selby Foundation, the Dart Foundation, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Comcast, Jon F. Swift Inc. and dozens of individual donors, the release notes. Just \$250 allows Texcellence to refurbish one computer, then offer training and ongoing support to a student and family in need. Training and distribution sessions are held at public schools and other sites around Sarasota County throughout the year.

For information about participating in the program, parents or other adult family members may contact their children's schools. For additional information about Texcellence, contact [michelle\\_frau@edfoundation.net](mailto:michelle_frau@edfoundation.net) or call 927-9000, Ext. 31334.



*When asked how he will use his new computer, Luis Castaneda smiles widely and says, 'To learn!' The Phillippi Shores first-grader, with his mother, Veronica Castanada, says he especially wants to practice reading and writing, his favorite subjects. Photo courtesy of the Education Foundation*

## CENSUS OF THE COUNTY'S HOMELESS TO BE TAKEN JAN. 28

The Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness will conduct the biennial census of homeless people in Sarasota County on Jan. 28, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

Results will be published in the spring as part of a community report, Jackie McNeil, the partnership's office manager, told the *News Leader* this week.

Richard Martin, the former executive director of the Partnership, announced at a Continuum of Care meeting in August that the "point-in-time" census is required every two years by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

*Staff Reports*

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## SIESTA VILLAGE BOLLARDS PROJECT OUT FOR BIDS AGAIN

After receiving no responses by the county's deadline, the Sarasota County Procurement Office put out another request for bids on Jan. 18, seeking contractors that can provide and install bollards to illuminate seven Siesta Village crosswalks.

The deadline for responses this time is Feb. 13, though one part of the solicitation on the county's [eProcure](#) site says the time is noon, and the formal solicitation summary says 2:30 p.m.

Unlike the previous solicitation, this one does not stipulate that bids be under \$50,000.

In an email update to the County Commission on Jan. 18, James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, wrote, "A request for quotes was advertised for the purchase and installation of the lighting bollards at seven Siesta Village crosswalks. No quotes were received. At least one contractor indicated that their estimated bid was higher than the \$50,000 limit for quotes and therefore by rule of the advertisement they did not submit a quote."

He added, "Staff is reviewing the request for quotes to determine next step, but based on

the feedback that the project is greater than \$50,000, an advertised low bid process may be necessary."

It was more than a year ago that Peter van Roekens, vice president of the Siesta Key Association and a Terrace East condominium complex representative to the Siesta Key Village Association, first asked about the possibility of illuminating the Village crosswalks.

Van Roekens said during the Jan. 3, 2012 SKVA meeting that the poor lighting in parts of the Village at night makes it difficult for drivers to spot pedestrians crossing Ocean Boulevard.

After Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson brought up the request to her fellow board members, concerns were raised about the cost and the exact type of lighting needed. County staff members worked with Van Roekens and Mark Smith, chairman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce; and Russell Matthes, the SKVA president and co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck, to arrange lighting demonstrations last summer.

Once the group settled on the type of bollard that seemed to work best, county staff began

working on the specifications for the original bid request.

Staff had estimated the cost of the bollards and installation to be \$31,500.

Contacted by *The Sarasota News Leader* this week about the continuing delays, Smith said, “This is incredible.”

Patterson told the *News Leader* she knew the Siesta Key organization representatives had

hoped to see the bollards installed before season began, but season — as evidenced by the number of tourists in the community already — is under way.

Still, Patterson said of the delays, “It took [Smith, van Roekens and Matthes] a very long time to choose the bollards.”

*Rachel Brown Hackney*



*With limited lighting in many areas of Siesta Village at night, drivers say it often is difficult to spot pedestrians in the crosswalks. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## MORE OPEN HOUSES PLANNED ON BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Sarasota County will hold open-house-style meetings this month — one in North Port and one in Englewood — on the draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which provides a framework to promote and encourage safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian travel within the county, as guided by the comprehensive plan.

Interested persons may come anytime during the two-hour open houses, a county news release says. Attendees will have the opportunity to view the draft plan and maps identifying existing facilities and high-priority areas for improvements, as well as to ask questions and provide comments, it adds.

The meetings, scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m., will be held as follows:

- Monday, Jan. 28, Morgan Family Community Center, 6207 West Price Blvd., North Port.
- Tuesday, Jan. 29, Englewood Sports Complex, 1300 S. River Road, Englewood.

Additional open houses will be scheduled in February, the news release says.

“The draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identifies a vision, mission and purpose for a bicycle and pedestrian network,” the release notes. “It

recognizes key partnerships and ongoing efforts to increase the safety and education of bicyclists and pedestrians. It includes facility design types and graphics, points out existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and recommended connections and identifies opportunities and deficiencies in the network for improvements.”

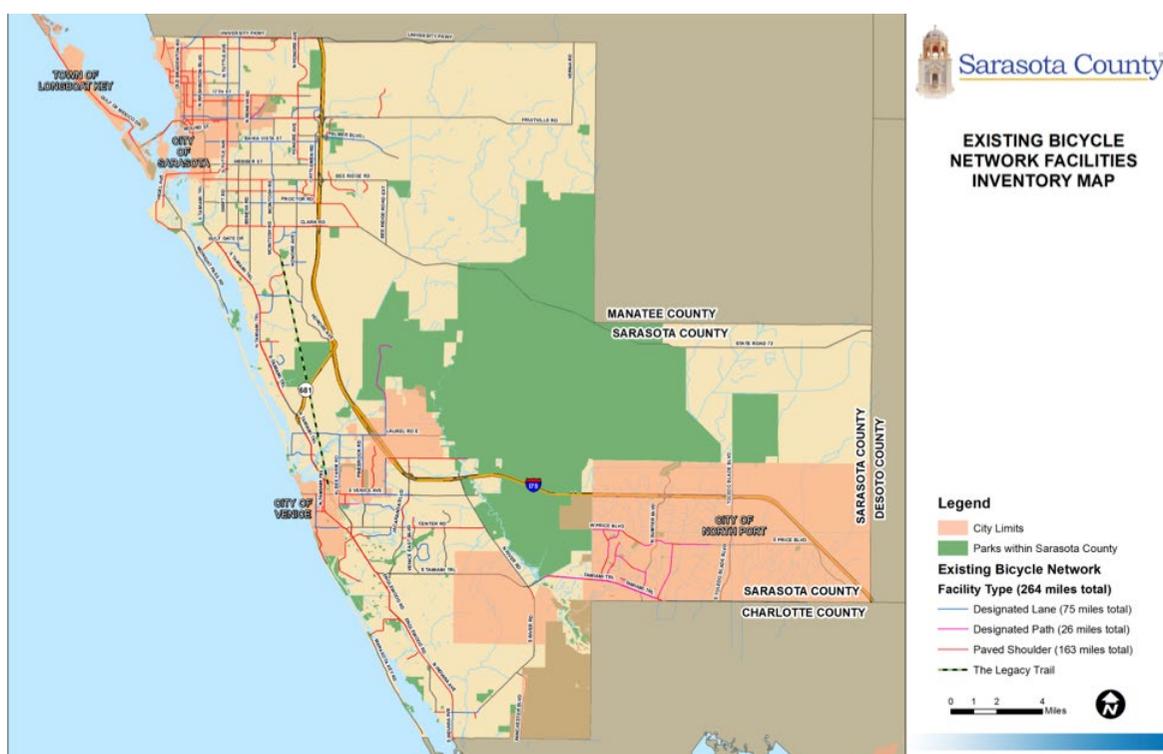
The release points out, “The plan is an essential tool for the county to use when applying for grant funds from state, federal and non-profit organizations.”

In addition to the open houses, the county has extended through Feb. 28 the opportunity for public input and comments on the draft plan via the county’s wiki site. A link to the wiki can be found online at the Sarasota County website, [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net), keyword “Pedestrian.”

After the wiki is closed and the open houses are held, county staff will prepare a summary

for the County Commission on the residents’ feedback and present the draft plan to the commission in the spring, the release notes.

For additional information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or email [bikepedplan@scgov.net](mailto:bikepedplan@scgov.net).



*The Sarasota County draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan includes a map showing existing bicycling facilities. Map courtesy Sarasota County*

## FOURTH ANNUAL EVENING FOR HEALTHY START FUNDRAISER PLANNED

Members of the public are invited to dine and mingle among hidden treasures at Sarasota's unique party venue, Sarasota Architectural Salvage, on Thursday, Jan. 31, from 6 to 9 p.m., for the fourth annual fundraiser, An Evening for Healthy Start.

This event will benefit the Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides professional services for pregnant women, infants and new families in Sarasota County to prevent low birth weight, prematurity and other possible poor health outcomes, a news release says.

"The event comes at a critical time in the Healthy Start Coalition's fiscal year, when funding for much-needed programs threatens to expire," the release points out. This year's event "has the potential to raise more money directly for Sarasota's pregnant women, infants and young children than in previous years," the release adds, thanks to the generosity of several local business members and individuals, including an anonymous donor who has come forward with a \$5,000 match-donation challenge. For every dollar raised at the event, up to \$5,000 will be matched dollar-for-dollar to benefit Healthy Start's Save My Life Program for African-American families, "who are statistically at a higher risk for poor birth outcomes," the release points out.

The remainder of the proceeds will go directly to parenting, psychosocial counseling and smoking cessation programs, "for which funding is rapidly running out," the release adds.

"It's at times like these we are so grateful for the community coming together to assure

pregnant moms and babies get needed Healthy Start services," says Executive Director Jennifer Highland in the release. "We are only funded by the state at half of need, and the vital donations we receive are always directed to our education and counseling services."

During this year's Evening for Healthy Start, patrons may enjoy a green-screen photo booth from Shuttershock Photography, whimsical face-painting by Erin Ernst, caricatures by Van Jazmin, chair massages from licensed massage therapist Lizz Pugh and live music from local folk/Americana band Passerine, recently named Band of the Year by the Songwriters Showcase of America, the release notes

Guests will be treated to light bites from a variety of local restaurants, including Nancy's Bar-B-Q, Mozzarella Fella, Nellie's Deli, Carr's Corner Cafe, Whole Foods Market Sarasota, Local Coffee and Tea, The Lollicake Queen, Sarasota Cupcakes, The Cookie Cottage and Paradise Pops. Beer will be provided by Gold Coast Distributing, and Jeff Rubin of Vin Cella Sarasota will share his exclusive wine collection with the event's patrons, the news release notes.

The event will also feature a silent auction.

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$30 at the door; they include two beverage tickets, a door prize raffle ticket and a coupon for Sarasota Architectural Salvage. All proceeds will benefit the Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County.

To purchase tickets, call 373-7070 or visit [www.SarasotaSalvage.com](http://www.SarasotaSalvage.com).

# COUNTY SCHOOLS TO ACCEPT 2013-14 SCHOOL CHOICE REQUESTS

Parents who would like their children to attend a Sarasota County public school in the 2013-14 school year other than their districted school are invited to submit a school choice application from Monday, Feb. 4, through Friday, Feb. 22.

The ability for parents to choose a school outside of their district began in the late 1990s in the county schools and has been well received by parents and school administrators, a news release notes. However, “since space is always limited and demand may be high at some schools, it is typically not possible to accommodate all school choice requests,” the release points out. Options at some schools that are open to school choice are limited to certain grade levels for the 2013-14 year if those schools are near their enrollment capacity for those grades, it adds. The complete list of schools open to choice is available at [www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/departments/schoolchoice](http://www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/departments/schoolchoice).

Schools that are open to school choice for 2013-14 may be holding open houses or other parent information events, the release notes. Parents may visit the websites of schools on the “open” list or

contact those schools for more information. All school websites are accessible via the district site at [www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools.aspx](http://www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools.aspx).

As in previous years, school choice approvals will be determined by a random lottery process, rather than on a first-come, first-served basis, the release says. Students will be assigned automatically to their districted school (based on the location of their residence) or their current school, unless a school choice application is received, it adds.

School choice application forms will be available beginning Monday, Feb. 4, at all public schools and at selected daycare facilities or by contacting the Office of School Choice at 927-9000, Ext. 32255.

Parents will be notified of choice assignments in April, the release says.

OPEN SCHOOLS		
ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
ALTA VISTA	BOOKER	BOOKER
ATWATER	BROOKSIDE	NORTH PORT
BRENTWOOD	HERON CREEK (GR 6) limited	SARASOTA
CRANBERRY	LAUREL NOKOMIS	VENICE
EMMA E BOOKER	McINTOSH	
ENGLEWOOD	VENICE	
FRUITVILLE (KG ONLY)	WOODLAND (GR 6) limited	
GARDEN		
GLENALLEN		
GOCIO		
GULF GATE		
LAKEVIEW		
LAMARQUE		
LAUREL NOKOMIS		
PHILLIPPI SHORES (KG ONLY)		
TATUM RIDGE		
TOLEDO BLADE		
TUTTLE		
VENICE ELEM (KG ONLY)		
WILKINSON		

*A Sarasota County Schools chart shows the elementary, middle and high schools open for choice starting Feb. 4. Chart courtesy Sarasota County Schools*

“Other district options, such as charter schools, magnet schools or magnet programs, do not require the completion of a school choice application,” the release points out. Students interested in attending

these schools or programs, including Bay Haven School of Basics Plus; Suncoast Polytechnical High School; the International Baccalaureate program at Riverview High School; Booker Middle School; the Visual & Performing Arts programs at Booker High School; and the Advanced International Certificate of Ed-

ucation at Sarasota High School, should contact those schools directly, the release notes.

Parents whose children receive their school of choice will be responsible for providing them with transportation to and from school, the release says.

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## PALESTINIAN DOCTOR TO SPEAK AS PART OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

The Herman and Sally Boxser Diversity Initiative is bringing to Sarasota Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian obstetrician who worked in Israel and who is the author of *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity*.

The founder of the Daughters for Life Foundation, he is a three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee and winner of numerous prizes for his efforts to bring Jews, Muslims and Christians together, a news release says.

On Thursday, Feb. 7, the Boxser Diversity Initiative will sponsor two public events at Temple Beth Sholom. At 7:30 p.m., Abuelaish will speak on his unique experiences during a free program open to the public, the release notes. "His moving, personal story will include an opportunity for dialogue with the audience," the release adds.

A coffee reception will immediately follow the speech, sponsored by the Florida Holocaust Museum. For those interested in a fuller experience, a dinner with Abuelaish has been scheduled at 6 p.m. on Feb. 7, catered by Michael's on East. Tickets are \$50, and seating is limited.

For ticket information for both events, contact Elaine Tedesco at 552-2780 or [etedesco@templebethsholomfl.org](mailto:etedesco@templebethsholomfl.org).

Temple Beth Sholom is located at 1050 S. Tuttle Ave. in Sarasota.

On Friday, Feb. 8, at 11 a.m., Abuelaish will speak to a select group of high school and college students, the release says. The presentation will include a question-and-answer session and an opportunity to talk directly with Abuelaish. The event will take place at Florida Studio Theatre on North Palm Avenue in downtown Sarasota.

The news release points out that Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel said of *I Shall Not Hate*: "This story is a necessary lesson against hatred and revenge."

Abuelaish witnessed the deaths of three of his daughters in Israeli shellfire, the release adds. However, he "continues to call for the people of the region to come together in understanding, respect and peace. This story is as relevant now as it ever was," the release notes.

Founded in 2009, The Herman and Sally Boxser Diversity Initiative at Temple Beth Sholom in Sarasota provides speakers, exhibits and other methods of communication to foster tolerance and understanding of all racial and religious groups, the release says.

## TIDWELL NAMED SARASOTA'S NEW UTILITIES MANAGER

Mitt Tidwell, “a veteran utilities manager with vast public and private sector experience, has accepted the position of utilities director with the City of Sarasota,” the city announced this week in a press release.

He will begin work on Monday, Feb. 25, the release adds.

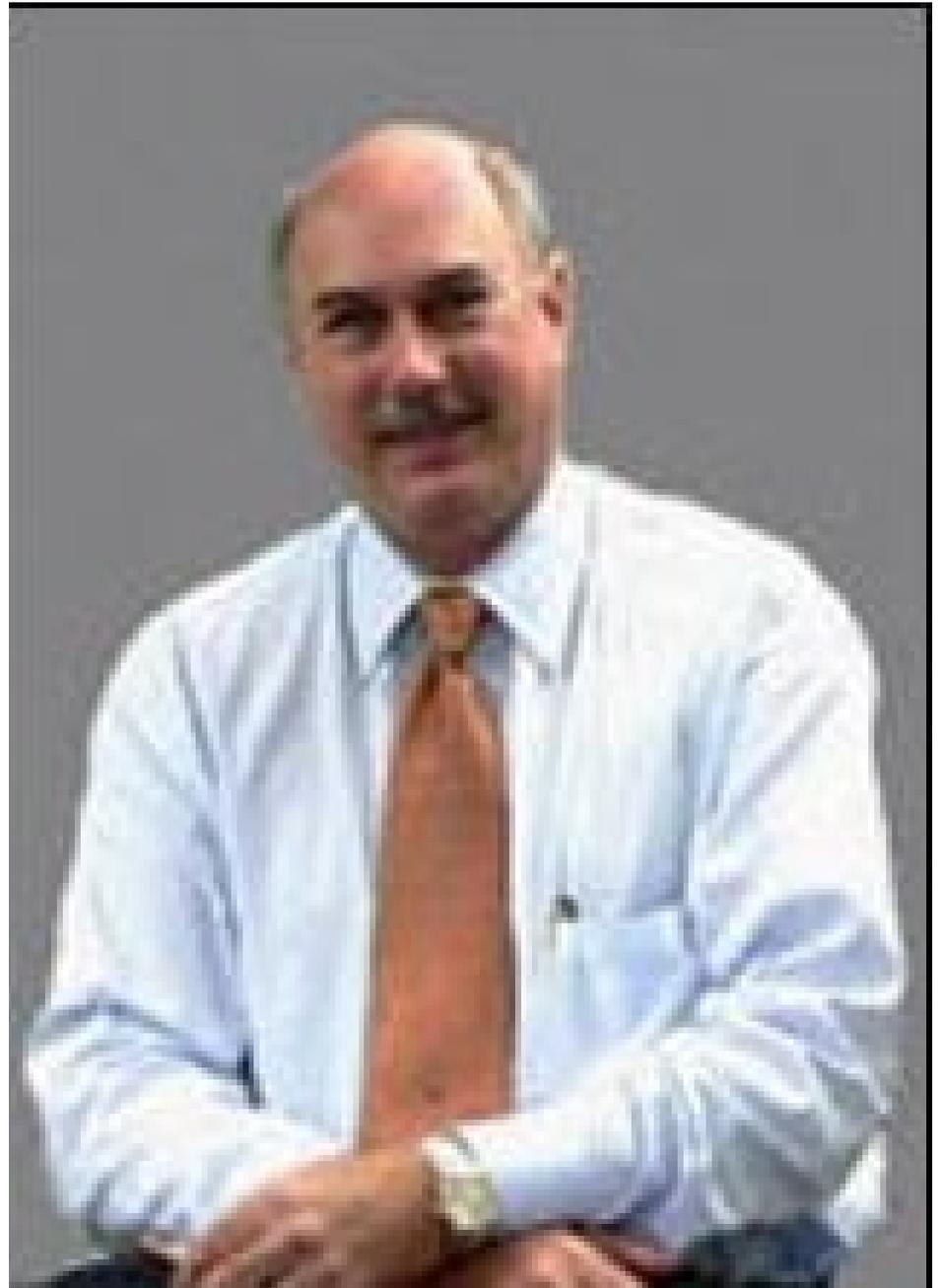
Tidwell is the utilities director for the City of Daytona Beach, the release notes. He has served in that position since 2005.

“In 2011, the City of Daytona Beach was awarded the prestigious gold medal for best tasting water in the Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting competition,” the release points out.

“I am excited to be a part of the Sarasota Utilities Department as we continue to improve the infrastructure and daily operations to provide the best possible service to our customers, while protecting the environment,” said Tidwell in the release.

Tidwell has more than 20 years of experience working in the field of water and wastewater utilities, including serving in utilities management positions for the City of Dallas and the City of Austin, TX, the release notes. He also has private sector experience.

“We have an accelerated Capital Improvement Project plan that will be implemented over the next five years and we need a seasoned veteran professional to oversee the Utilities Department,” said City Manager Tom Barwin in the release. “Mitt has run a utilities system as large or larger than the City of Sarasota for the past 20 years. I look forward to him becoming part of our team and guiding our utilities



*Mitt Tidwell/Contributed photo*

systems to provide the best water and wastewater service possible for our residents as we continue to upgrade our utility systems.”

This is the third major department head position Barwin has filled since starting work as city manager in September 2012, the release points out. Police Chief Bernadette DiPino joined the City of Sarasota three weeks ago, and Finance Director John Lege will begin work next month.

Barwin soon will announce a replacement for Human Resources Director Kurt Hovetter who is retiring at the end of the month, the release adds.

## DELANEY ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BOARD

The Board of Directors of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County recently elected Philip A. Delaney as its chairman, the foundation has announced.

Although Delaney was set to begin a term as chairman in July, he agreed to take the position early because Chairwoman Margaret Callihan left Sarasota for a major career opportunity with SunTrust Bank in Fort Lauderdale, a news release says.

“The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is fortunate to have a leader of Phil Delaney’s stature and reputation at the helm,” says Community Foundation President and CEO Roxie Jerde in the release. “His commitment to our community is evidenced by his leadership, and his expertise within the financial community leading Northern Trust inspires great confidence in our donors. Plus he represents the values of the Community Foundation — integrity, compassion, empowerment, innovation, quality and stewardship — so well.”

Delaney has been involved on the Community Foundation board since 2000, the release notes. He has served on numerous committees of the nonprofit, including Fathers and Families in the Workplace, the Education Focus Team, the BOOST Initiative, the G2G Committee, Community Investment and the Executive Committee.

“I am very excited about this opportunity to work with Roxie Jerde and her wonderful colleagues, as well as our talented, committed board of directors,” Delaney says in the release. “Our Foundation holds a special place of prominence in our community: it is the giv-



*Phil Delaney/Contributed*

ing spirit and heart of Sarasota County,” Delaney adds in the release.

“Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors,” he continues, “the Community Foundation invested more than \$12 million last year in our community through grants to area nonprofits and scholarships. Our goal for 2013 is to continue to earn our donors’ trust and provide the highest level of financial stewardship for the benefit of our community.”

Delaney is the president and chief executive officer of Northern Trust Florida in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

In addition to his service at the Community Foundation, the release notes, he serves on the board of directors of the Van Wezel Foundation and the Sarasota Memorial Healthcare Foundation. His previous board involvements include the New College Foundation, United Way of Sarasota County, SCOPE and the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.

## ENHANCED SAFETY LIGHTING INSTALLED AT URFER FAMILY PARK

Upgraded and energy-efficient safety lighting has been installed at the playgrounds of Urfer Family Park, 4000 Honore Ave., Sarasota, the county has announced.

Crews from Himes Electric Co. Inc. put in concrete bases, electrical conduit and poles and fixtures, retrofitting existing lighting with energy-efficient light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures, a county news release says.

“The lighting will enable park patrons to enjoy the playgrounds longer during the shorter daylight hours of fall and winter,” the release adds.

“Urfer Family Park provides a unique combination of recreational and learning opportunities with playgrounds for toddlers through teens, a fitness trail and a 1-mile nature trail through pine flatwoods and forested wetlands,” the release points out. The nature trail includes an observation boardwalk.

In addition, the park has a picnic pavilion, restrooms and the historic C.B. Wilson House.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000, or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

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## SBEP ANNOUNCES SIX FREE GUIDED KAYAK TRIPS

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) will be offering several free kayak excursions in Sarasota Bay, the nonprofit organization has announced.

The next trips include those in the Lido Mangrove Tunnels (Feb. 2 and Feb. 16), Blind Pass (March 2 and March 16), and Lyons and Blackburn Bay (April 6 and April 20), a news release says. All of the SBEP kayak excursions require online registration at [sarasotabay.org](http://sarasotabay.org).

“The SBEP Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program is a fun learning opportunity to discover the plants, animals, habitats and restoration projects that distinguish Sarasota Bay,” the release says. Brad Tanner, a professional guide and

the School Programs Coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory, is the kayak tour leader. He is also a member of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the release says.

Participants are required to bring their own kayaks and gear. Outfitters throughout the region rent kayaks and offer demonstrations and beginner classes, the release notes. The Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program is for experienced kayakers.

“The late Jack Taylor, a respected marine biologist and former member of the CAC, launched the kayak tour program in 2007 as part of a SBEP Bay Partners Grant,” the release points out.

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## THREE CHARGED IN HOME DEPOT THEFTS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has charged three people in a scheme to regularly steal merchandise from Home Depot in Venice and return it for store credit, the office has announced.

On at least eight occasions, members of the group entered the store with stolen merchandise or took items off the shelf and went to the service desk to return them, a Sheriff's Office news release says. Each time the suspect would receive store credit on a gift card and

then would sell the cards to pawn shops, the release adds.

“The trio was responsible for at least \$1,533 worth of fraudulent returns,” the release points out.

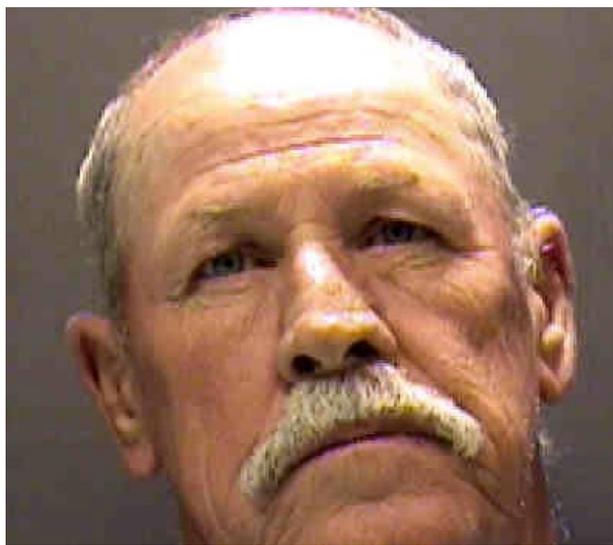
Juanita Wirick, 26; her boyfriend, Ryan Albritton, 32; and his father, Calvin Albritton, 62, all

of 338 E. Bay Street, Osprey, are all charged with Scheme to Defraud. Ryan Albritton has 14 additional charges of Fraud for providing false ownership information to the pawnshops and Dealing in Stolen Property, the release says.

This investigation is continuing, with additional charges expected, the release adds. 



Ryan Albritton/Contributed photo



Calvin Albritton/Contributed photo



Juanita Wirick/Contributed photo

“When you are courting a nice girl an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity.” — *Albert Einstein on relativity*



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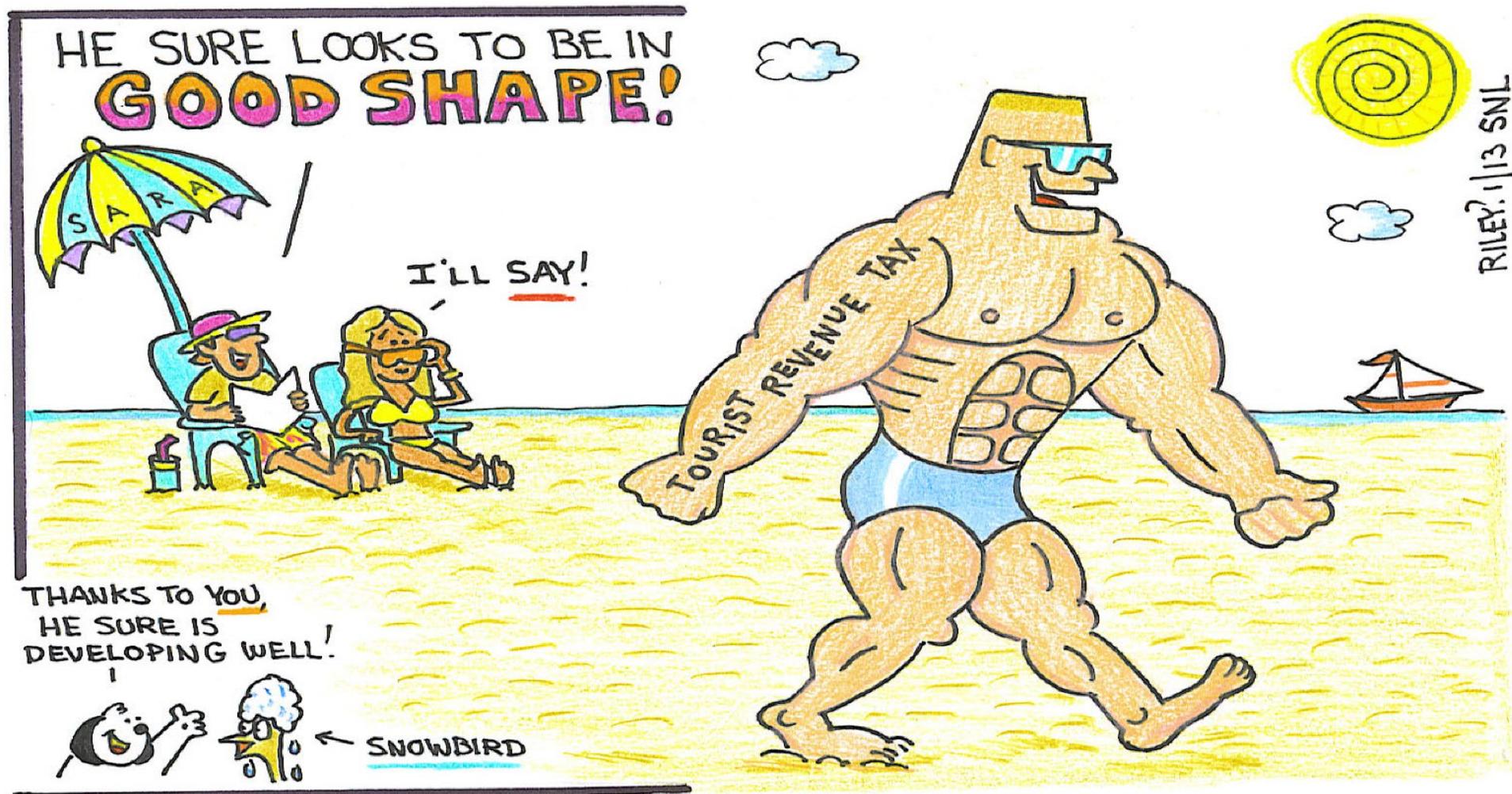
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# OPINION



## COUNTY COMMISSION FUMBLES TWO IMPORTANT DECISIONS

### EDITORIAL

In recent meetings of the Sarasota County Commission, two important issues have been raised.

The first was a request to create a countywide domestic partnership registry, following the example of the City of Sarasota, whose recently enacted registry began accepting applications in November. Given the limited population and boundaries of the city and the much larger population of the county, it was felt by supporters that a countywide registry would be more useful to residents.

The idea of the registry, which has been adopted in other counties and municipalities in the state, has been frequently characterized as a gay rights issue, since same-sex couples are forbidden to marry in Florida. However,

the advantage of the domestic partnership registry is to provide a simple mechanism for unmarried couples to deal with life events in a way that already is afforded to married couples, making it a far more universal need.

Couples registered in a domestic partnership may be designated as emergency contacts, visit one another in the hospital or other medical facility, make medical decisions for each other when one is unable to do so, be involved in educational decisions for children of the relationship and even make funeral arrangements for a deceased partner.

Given the dramatic increase in couples living together — and even raising families — without being married, the need for such provisions becomes more urgent. This is especially true for senior citizens, who might enter

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# OPINION

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into an intimate relationship but, for family or inheritance reasons, not wish to be married. These couples want and need the right to be involved in critical decisions that affect each of them, but recent changes in healthcare laws and other regulations make this extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Perhaps it is for that reason that the City of Venice, with the oldest average age of any city in America, unanimously voted last week to proceed with creating a domestic partnership registry.

Certainly, a countywide registry would better protect citizens who are in intimate relationships but are not married. Unfortunately, most of the county commissioners ducked the issue by wistfully suggesting the Legislature could enact a statewide registry.

In a state where legislative assaults on gay rights, the reproductive rights of women, voting rights and immigrants are fixtures of every session, such a registry is not likely. In fact, Sen. Eleanor Sobel, a Democrat from Hollywood, has filed bills to establish a domestic partnership registry in the previous four sessions of the Legislature. All died in committee. Undaunted, she has filed another bill for this session, although it likely will meet the same fate.

That should not be a surprise to our commissioners, who know perfectly well that there is almost no chance of our Legislature establishing the registry. Their obduracy in refusing even to allow county attorneys to investigate the matter indicates their indifference to the needs of those who would most benefit from the law. And many people would benefit.

Of course, the number who benefit from their action — or inaction — apparently is not a significant factor in the decision-making process. That was made clear when, on Jan. 16, the commissioners voted 3-2 to extend sharply reduced road construction impact fees — already half of what they were two years ago — for another two years.

Impact fees are the most effective way for the county to mitigate the cost of demands placed on infrastructure by new construction and new residents. In fact, the commissioners were expected to weigh staff recommendations on a comprehensive overhaul of impact fees, based on the latest market data in our area, in an effort to make the fees more reflective of our nascent economic recovery. Unfortunately, an error by county staff member delayed updated calculations of the needed data, so staff requested a six-month extension of the old rates.

Instead, some of the commissioners knuckled under to pressure from the construction industry and voted to keep the impact fees at their drastically reduced levels for two more years. This despite the real possibility that corrected data from the county staff might show that move to be a very costly one as construction activity increases in the months and years ahead.

Another week or two was all that was needed to get hard data in front of them to make the most informed decision. Commissioners Nora Patterson and Charles Hines wanted to postpone a decision until that data was in hand. But the majority voted to ignore the prudence of waiting, and handed a late Christmas pres-

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# OPINION

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ent — a big one — to the local construction industry.

When it comes to the humanitarian concerns of their constituents, who might be subjected to great suffering as a consequence of being barred from consulting on the care of a loved one, the commission shows no desire for urgency, electing instead to wait for a legislative action they can predict will never happen.

Yet, when it comes to throwing taxpayers' cash at builders who grouse continually about having to pay their fair share of contributing to suburban sprawl and infrastructure needs, the commissioners could not act quickly enough.

In both instances, the citizens of Sarasota County will suffer the consequences. 

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## BRAIN FREEZE



**By Harriet Cuthbert**  
*Contributing Writer*

**COMMENTARY** Recently, I was assaulted with a horrific cold/cough/bronchitis that lasted more than two weeks before it released me back into the comfort of my regular world and routine.

I know it was a cold because the telegenic TV doctor told me that anything above the neck usually signified a cold, while below the neck, it was the dreaded flu. What a relief to know the “medical” diagnosis of my symptoms, and right through that magic TV screen, too.

But he never mentioned my most critical symptom — I have a “brain freeze.” That is right. Those zillions of germs living in my head, swirling around and causing me so much misery, have completely destroyed my ability to think.

Unfortunately, they also have hindered me in the art of writing articles, because everything

I used to think about or question or enjoy — i.e., my next 10 trips, what kind of boat I want, what T-shirt to wear to the gym — all of these ideas and their answers have completely disappeared from my head.

I have a brain freeze and I am very worried about when my brain will thaw out. I am worried about when my old life will return. Is it possible that I miss my regular (mundane) routines of shopping, cooking, cleaning, writing and even drinking wine? Would I not prefer to look forward to any of them instead of wallowing in self-pity because I have lost my appetite and cannot stop sneezing?

Wait a minute. The dense fog in my head is clearing. I can almost breathe normally and I can actually smell the coffee again.

Now I have absolutely no excuse not to be writing again. It is amazing what a little clarity can do to the mind. 

# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE JAN. 18 EDITORIAL WAS NOT FAIR TO THE POLICE

To the Editor:

While an overwrought tone in a letter to the editor might be easily understood, an opinion piece ought to at least have the appearance of balance, especially when written by a professional editorial staff. Phrases such as “out of control,” “jack booted” and “pistol to the head,” as well as sexist references to “Cagney and Lacey,” do not contribute to any sort of reasonable dialogue. (The Jan. 18 editorial regarded an incident on Dec. 31 in which a realtor and her client were confronted by a police officer.)

By your own account a call was placed, probably by a neighbor concerned about a possible burglary. The officer spoke clearly and followed procedure.

Her gun hand was steady as she called for backup, and once the backup process starts, it must be resolved “by the book.”

Did you bother to ask what exactly “inspecting the property” might have entailed? Were they looking in windows? Wandering around the backyard? Was the home empty or occupied? Had there been burglaries in the area? The realtor’s car, which might have carried her logo, was not on the street.

Something in their behavior caused a call to be made. The officer responded. It’s that simple.

And one more thing: Susan Christy (the realtor) is a dear old friend of mine, and the thought of her lying facedown on a concrete floor does not please me.

I am sorry for her ordeal, but knowing Susan, she will find a way to laugh about this incident later. That officer cannot afford to laugh about or apologize for doing her job, and I suggest you at *The Sarasota News Leader* need to make a finer point of being “fair and balanced” in your editorials.

*Diana Hamilton  
Sarasota*



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Sarasota News Leader* welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to [Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com), with “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

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# SKY HIGHWAYS

## 'BOWS AND FLOWS OF ANGEL HAIR ... AND FEATHER CANYONS EVERYWHERE'\*

**Story and Photos By Fran Palmeri**

*Contributing Writer*

On the heels of a cold front, highways course across the sky. There are no lanes, no lights, no signposts. Except for birds and the occasional plane, the skies are free of traffic.

But much of the time in winter, Florida's skies are azure from horizon to horizon. The sun holds sway.

In spring, clouds come and go, with intermittent rain, a dress rehearsal for what is to come.

Florida's humid summer with its continuous cycle of warm air rising and cooling to form clouds in different shapes and sizes provides a textbook example of thunderstorm formation. Mere "puffs of smoke" in early morning grow to great proportions as the day progresses, and by late afternoon, huge

cumulous-nimbus clouds spill over in deluges punctuated by thunder and lightning. Our thunderheads are said to be the highest in the world.

The storm passes. Patches of blue appear and in a quiet coda to the day, the reds and golds of evening's last light floods.

Glowering hurricane skies with their drab grays of T. S. Elliot's "patient etherized upon a table," are like none other. With their counterclockwise circulation, a hallmark of tropical storms, they weigh heavily on earth and soul.

In late fall, clouds go to ground. Fog drifts in from the Gulf of Mexico, painting everything luminescent white.

*\* Thanks to Joni Mitchell, who wrote Both Sides Now.*



Even the absence of clouds makes a statement, especially on evenings when a full moon rises clear and unhampered over city streets and countryside.

All four elements make up clouds: Earth is represented by bits of hair and leaves, mineral dust, spores and bacteria; air is the transporter; fire is the result of lightning strikes; and then there is water.

Despite their amorphous nature, clouds have been organized into species with three main classifications: cirrus, the highest, with a parallel threadlike formation; cumulus — cauliflower-like domes that grow up from a horizontal base; and stratus, a continuous cloud that grows from top to bottom.

Luke Howard, the Englishman who “named” the clouds, grew up in the late 1700s in a house with a huge plate glass window. As a boy he sat for hours gazing out across London’s rooftops at the skies. Years of observation noting the differences in clouds grew into study when he was an adult, and eventually he linked the differences to changes in the weather. At a meeting of the Askesian Society in 1802, he presented his paper, “On the Modifications of Clouds,” which grouped clouds into species with Latin names based on the Linnaean system being formulated at that time. It took the scientific community by storm. His nomenclature — cirrus, cu-



mulus, stratus — so familiar to us — captured the imagination of the public and inspired poets such as Wordsworth (“I wandered lonely as a cloud.”)

Shelley and Goethe wrote poems in his honor.

Howard, himself a painter, inspired British artist John Constable, who made cloud-filled skies the focal point of his paintings. Constable was emulating earlier Dutch painters such as Hobbema. With one foot in the sea, the fragile Dutch landscape in Hobbema’s art is reduced to a low horizon dominated by majestic skies of fleeting shapes.

Just as clothes make the man, clouds make the land and forge a connection between land and sky. A puffy cabbage palm is mirrored in the cumulous cloud above it. Our view of the landscape is determined by the presence or absence of clouds. In win-

ter, Florida is 10 percent clouds, 90 percent land. The reverse is true in summer.

From her balcony atop a Sarasota high-rise Jocelyn delights in “big cloud” days. Steve, a songwriter, loves the shape shifters in clouds. “They’re always in a state of becoming!” he says. Schaften — little sheep — remind Kirsten of her German childhood.

Leonardo da Vinci came up with many of his inventions while observing the skies. Lying on his back in continual wonder at the changing panorama above him, he got more inspiration from clouds than any intellectual exercise.

In no other place is the “P” word mentioned as often as it is in Florida. Perhaps it is because rows upon rows of little puffy clouds against a cerulean sky invoke visions of Paradise. One half expects angels playing harps to peek out. 







## ASK OTUS

### **FOR THIS INSTALLMENT OF 'HOW BIRDS DO IT,' THE GREAT EGRET PAIR ARDEA AND ALBA PUT ON QUITE A DISPLAY FOR MATURE AUDIENCES**

Dear Readers,

As we reach this point in our story about how “birds do it,” Ardea, the female Great Egret, is in full, drop-dead gorgeous mating regalia and has attracted the attention of Alba, among others. He is equally exquisitely groomed and too obviously crazy about her.

It is embarrassing to describe what hoops a female bird requires the male to jump through before she accepts him as her mate. When human males, adolescent or adult, become love-struck, show off their prowess and strut their macho stuff, people remark behind their backs, “He’s making an ass of himself.” The phrase should really be, “He’s making an Egret of himself.” The wild ass is a model of courtly decorum in comparison with an egret. Why? Because the female ass when in estrus gladly makes herself available to the male. Ardea, lacking an estrus cycle, nevertheless has the exact same urgent primeval need to mate so her eggs will be fertilized and she can breed and brood.



*Alba warns away a Wood Stork. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*



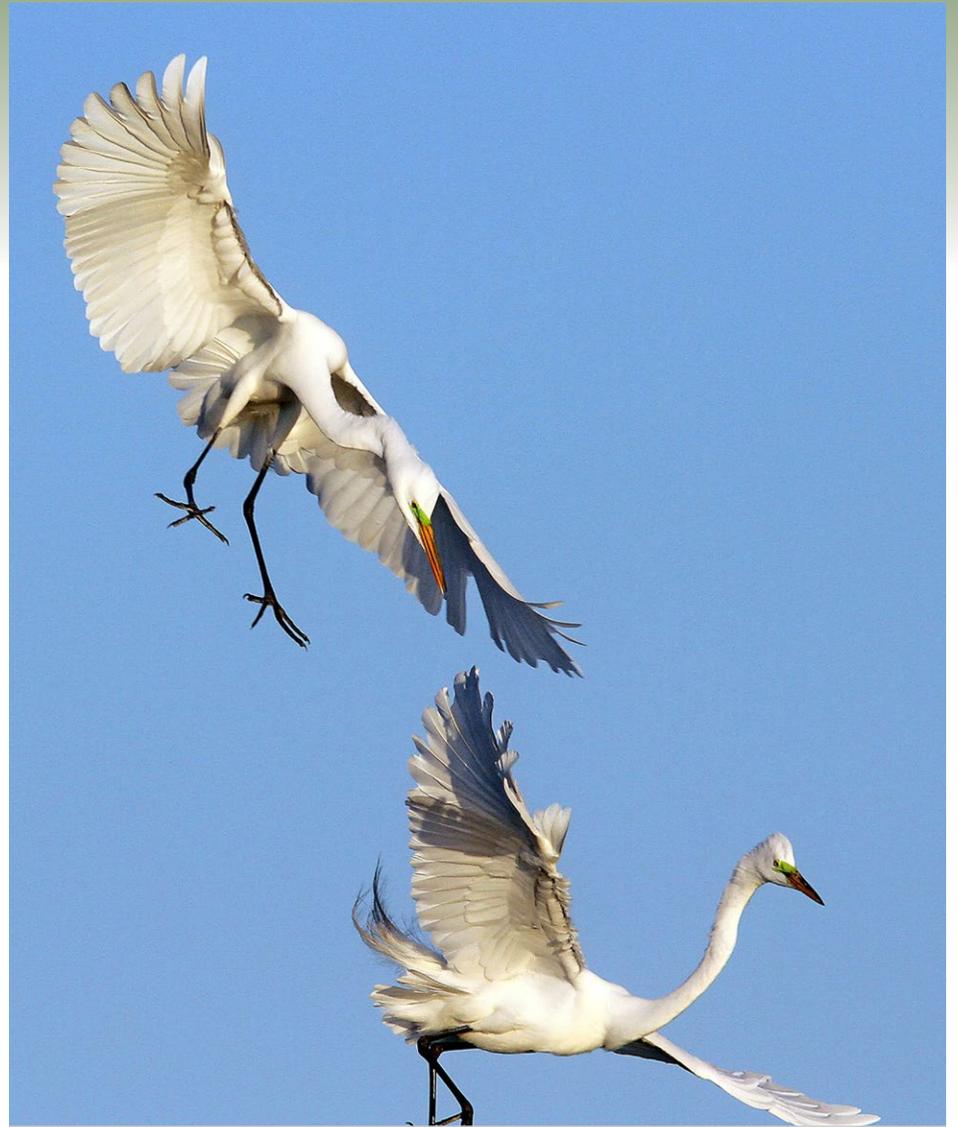
*Ardea and Alba's two chicks are visible in their nest. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*

And what does she do? She turns into the “Ice Queen”! She is coy, reticent and at the same time, maddeningly coquettish. Poor Alba. “Between the desire and the spasm” falls the test of true mettle.

Ardea is settled in an oak tree by the shore. Alba is across the water in the bay’s ait. He begins the courtship by “displaying” his all to her. He extends his elegant neck and lifts his deep orange-and-black bill to the skies and shimmers his body while framed against the background of his fanned aigrettes.

What does Ardea do? She sits in the oak and preens, watching Alba through her diaphanous aigrettes — a houri gazing through her virginal veil.

After shimmering, dancing and prancing, Alba proceeds to take on any male he perceives as a competitor. Ardea will now witness some of the most amazing avian aerial displays. Alba



*Alba remains above Rival during their aerial battle. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*



*Ardea and Alba finally consummate their courtship. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*

and Rival will go at each other in mid-air with bills half open, striking heavy blows with open wings until Rival is beaten down and concedes the fight.

What is interesting about these battles is that they look far more brutal and deadly than the schoolyard fights they actually are. Rick Greenspun has provided an extraordinary, accompanying close-up shot of a battle scene so you can see for yourself that it is really about Alba forcing the opponent down and away, with a firm nip to the leg or neck skin, while he stays above Rival.

The amusing end to this is that when Alba and Ardea nest, Rival and Mrs. Rival's nest is only



*Alba forces Rival to the ground. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*



*Alba arrives with nesting stick. Photo courtesy of Rick Greenspun*



*Ardea preens in an oak. File photo*

a few feet away in that crowded nesting colony.

Eventually, in what must have seemed like an eternity to Alba, Ardea stops preening and flies to Alba's aid, where they engage in a dreamy courtship, a graceful, ethereal feathery sarabande, a dance banned in Spain in the 16th century for its explicit sensuality.

One day, Alba gently grabs Ardea's bill with his and strokes his neck against hers, all the while cooing and gurgling discordant, inharmonious croaks, squawks and gracks into her ear. She reciprocates and they move to their

bridal chamber and "do it"! Ardea Alba is at last a Great Egret.

The bridal chamber is their nest. Alba flies in the materials while Ardea arranges their placement.

Cole Porter wrote that "Roosters do it with a doodle and a cock." In the case of Egrets, and virtually all other species of birds, the male lacks a penis. Birds have only a cloaca. Anatomically speaking, a cloaca is the posterior opening that serves as the one and only opening for the intestinal, urinary and reproductive tracts of birds. So, Alba must mount Ardea in the missionary position so they can tightly con-



*Alba is doing his best to win a show of ardor from Ardea. Photo courtesy Rick Greenspun*

join their cloacae. He then spurts his sperm into her and fertilizes her eggs. This act of love is most charmingly called “the cloacal kiss.”

So, dear readers, now you know how “birds do it”! And I have not forgotten my promise to take you *ab ovo usque ad mala*. I have included this week a photo of Ardea Alba’s two ludicrously adorable chicks, “the apples” of their parents’ eyes!

Ardea, devoted to Alba and her chicks, retained her beauty but became somewhat staid, matronly and, at times, a bit shrewish.

Alba, well, he remained wildly in love with Ardea and never lost his “boyish charm.” One day, a clueless Wood Stork was making its way home to his nest and came too close to Alba’s nest. Before I knew it, Alba was up and at it again! A feathered Peter Pan.

**Otus**

Dear Otus,

Eric here. I followed your advice and recently took a drive out to the Celery Fields. Alexis and I were amazed at the abundance of wildlife, especially the avian variety.

One pond clogged with bulrushes was teeming with a variety of birds. Unfortunately, few wanted to come out to socialize. We should have brought a tape recorder, though. The variety of songs and calls was astounding.

Before we gave up and headed home, this little creature (pictured) decided to emerge long enough to pose for a couple of photos. Unfortunately, I have absolutely no idea what bird it is (the Florida Audubon app on my iPad is only useful if you already know what you’re looking for). So I thought I would ask you to identify this relation (albeit distant) of yours.

*All the best,  
Eric*



*Male Boat-Tailed Grackles abound at the Celery Fields right now. File photo*

Dear Eric,

From your excellent, super clear photo you would have recognized this Boat-Tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) immediately — had it been a male and not a female! For my readers this is a super example of birds that display sexual dimorphism. Vive la différence!

Thank you for this opportunity to show the difference between a male and female bird.

And how nice to see a Boat-Tailed Grackle sitting in a pretty natural setting at the Celery Fields rather than hanging around the dumpsters in the Captain Curt's Crab & Oyster Bar area on Siesta Key. Yes, these Grackles have adapted very well to urban living.

One interesting fact about “your” Grackle — its dark eyes indicate that this is a Florida and Gulf Coast Boat-Tailed Grackle, our very own native. The “foreign” (“up North”) Boat-Tailed displays a light-colored yellow eye; it is equally striking in appearance.

I hope your neighborhood still attracts a wide variety of birds and Alexis is enjoying the little Great Egret, whose behavior she found so enchanting. As for your immature Red-Shouldered Hawk, so intrigued by you and your outdoor activities, may its presence continue to grace your garden, not mine!

*Otus*

## ABOUT OTUS

*Otus Rufous*, an Eastern Screech-Owl, was born on Siesta Key and is a full-time resident there. An avid hunter, accomplished vocalist and genuine night owl, Otus is a keen observer of our local wildlife and knows many of nature's secrets. Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus. So please send your questions and photos to [askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com](mailto:askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com). Thank you.



*A female Boat-Tailed Grackle makes herself at home in the marsh at the Celery Fields. Contributed photo*



**I like to take my time.**

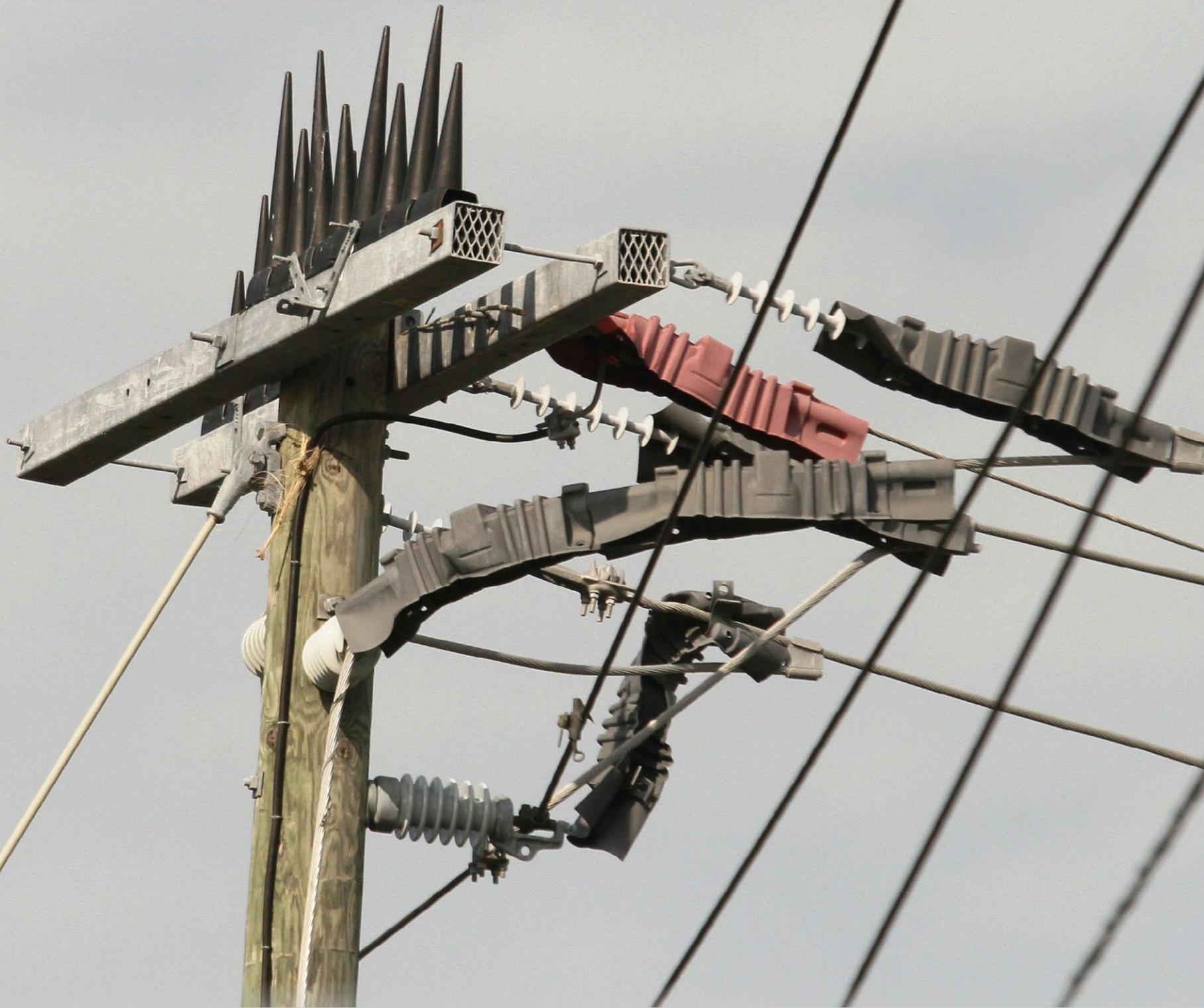
**Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota*, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.**

**There is so much there, I don't know where to begin. So it is hard to resist the urge to read it all at once. But I know better. Take your time and indulge in all that it has to offer.**

***You have a whole week.***

**SarasotaNewsLeader.com • Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**

# WHERE DID THEY GO?



*An osprey nest originally sat atop this utility pole on Siesta Key. Photo by Tatiana Staats*

## **FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT GIVES AN OSPREY PAIR A NEW, SAFER NESTING LOCATION ON SIESTA KEY**

**By David Staats**

*Contributing Writer*

Last week *Siesta Seen* reported on an osprey nest built atop an electric utility pole at the intersection of Midnight Pass Road and Beach Road on Siesta Key. This week it was noticed that the nest had been removed and relocated

to a dedicated osprey nesting platform some 30 yards to the west.

The relocation occurred on Jan. 16, as the result of a request by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to



*The Siesta ospreys are enjoying their newly relocated nest, observers say. The female is just leaving for an island outing while the male is hunkered down. His head is just above the red "X." Photo by Tatiana Staats*

Florida Power and Light (FPL), the owner of the utility pole. The pole's insulators were thought to be worn and in danger of falling off. A collision between an osprey and a live power line would have resulted in the bird's death by electrocution.

FPL Media and Public Affairs Executive Greg Brostowicz explained that trained FPL crews relocate osprey nests at the requests of the FWC. Nests will also be relocated out of concern for the birds' safety or if a nest's location could cause customer service interruptions. To date, FPL has successfully relocated more than 100 osprey nests, including approximately 25 in 2012. All relocated nests are viable.

When undertaking a project such as the one on Siesta, Brostowicz wrote in an email, the relocated nest is placed on a special nesting platform, preferably a standalone pole without wires. If that is not possible, then the platform is offset from the pole with a support brace.

FPL locates the nest platform as close as possible to the original nesting site, and it ensures that the nest platform is as high, if not higher, than the elevation of the original location.

"We try to relocate the nests when they are not 'active'; that is, empty of eggs or chicks," he wrote.

When a nest is in the early construction stage, and consists mainly of sticks that have not yet been formed into a nest, he added, FPL crews may simply remove the sticks. Ospreys are very persistent, however, and will continue to drop sticks onto the pole unless provided with a safe nesting platform nearby.

If the nest is established, then the crews use bucket trucks to access it and place poles under the nest to lift it intact. The nest is moved to the ground, transported to the location of the replacement nesting platform and lifted onto that platform.

Sticks that fall from the nest while it is being moved are placed with it at the relocated position.

Michelle van Deventer, the bald eagle coordinator for Florida Fish and Wildlife, explained that the relocation of osprey nests is carried out under a blanket permit held by FPL. The terms of that permit embody the principles set forth by the [Avian Power Line Interaction Committee](#) (APLIC).

According to its website, APLIC includes as members more than 30 electric utilities in the United States and Canada, as well as the Edison Electric Institute, National Rural Electrical Cooperative Association, Rural Utilities Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. FPL is an active APLIC member.

Per APLIC, on Dec. 20, 2012, APLIC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released their updated guidance document, *Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines: State of the Art in 2012*. This best-practices document, originally published in 1994, offers electric utilities and cooperatives, federal power administrations, wildlife agencies and other stakeholders specific guidance for reducing bird collisions with power lines based on the most current, published science and technical information.

The Siesta ospreys have fully adjusted to their new homestead. Their relocated nest is no longer wireable for electricity, but in all other respects the pair appears to be thriving. 



## THE ARTS AND THE CITY

*(From left) Howard Rosenthal, president of the Sarasota County Historical Society, introduces Kay Kipling, Kevin Dean, Heidi Connor and William Hartman. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

### WHAT MADE SARASOTA A HAVEN FOR ARTISTS?

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

Just how did Sarasota become an artists' colony?

The answer was the topic of the latest *Conversations at the Crocker* history program, held Jan. 16.

Kay Kipling, executive editor of Sarasota Magazine, moderated the discussion, which focused on the role of John Ringling and the status of art and artists today in a city that has been synonymous with fine arts in Florida.

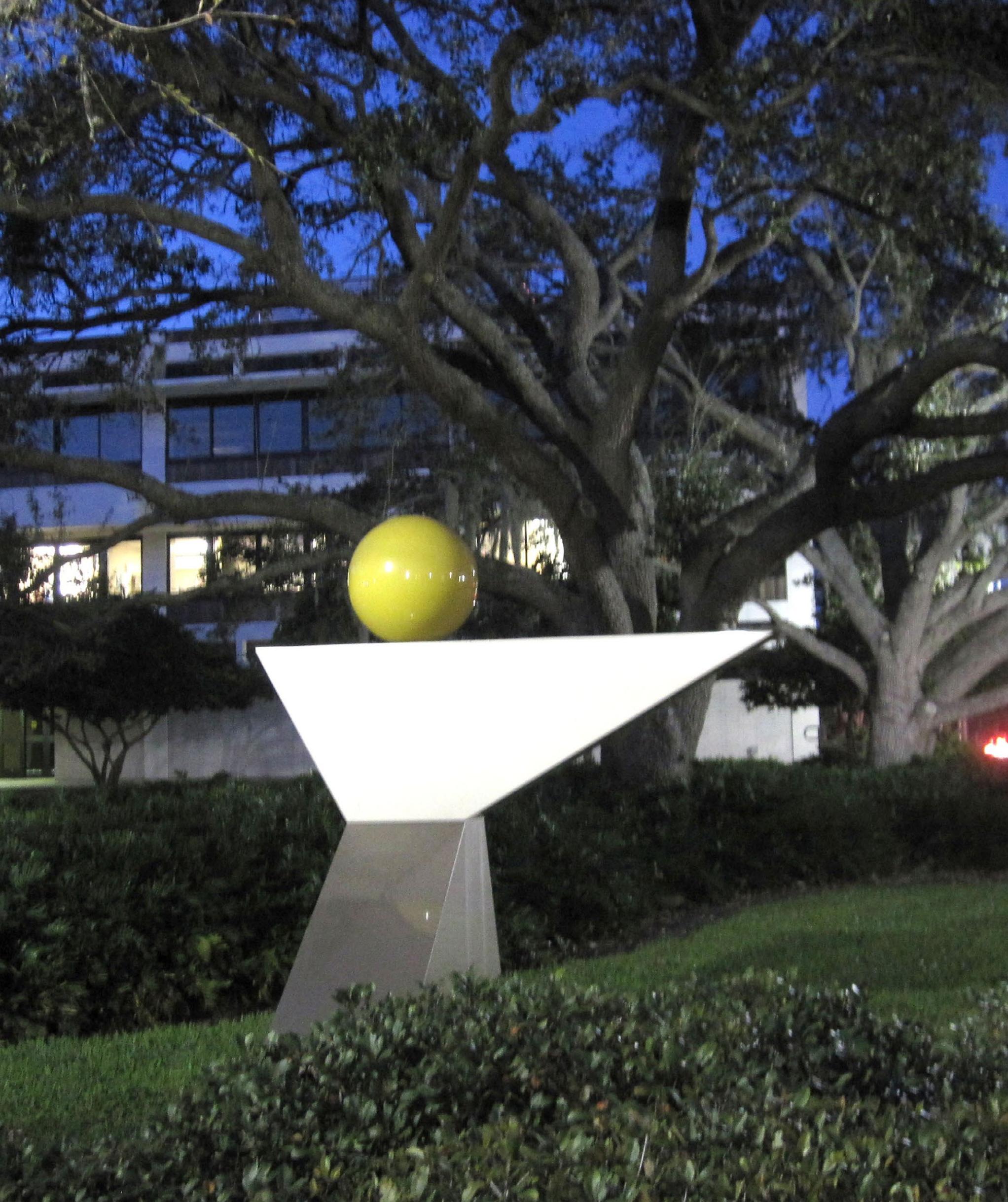
The panel members were Heidi Connor, a gallery professional, curator and art consultant; Kevin Dean, director of Selby Gallery at the Ringling College of Art + Design; and William Hartman of Hartman Gallery, whose parents

were an integral part of the arts community that Sarasota residents still embrace so warmly.

“The history of the Sarasota artists did sort of start with the John Ringling Museum,” Dean began. “Ringling, though broke at the time, put his name on the Ringling College ... But you also had the Sarasota Art Association, the longest running gallery and association in Sarasota.”

Dean illustrated his comments with a slide show featuring many local artists and their work.

Hartman continued with a history lesson: “When Ringling built his museum and lent his



*Public art abounds in the city of Sarasota, including this sculpture in front of City Hall. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

name to the Ringling School of Art, it was that group of artists who came as instructors in the '30s who gave impetus to the town as a destination for people to come and paint and study art."

"At the end of World War II, [it was] the G.I. bill that flooded those studios [at Ringling] with the young artists, that nucleus of young men and women who came in the post-war years that lifted the Sarasota Art Association into prominence," Hartman continued. "For many years there were no private galleries to show work. But slowly that changed, and at one time there were as many as 14 private schools, many of them quite small, giving private instruction."

Hartman noted, "By the 1950s, there were 80 working artists in Sarasota with their own working studios. So in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a blossoming of artists and galleries. This itself gave impetus to the legend of Sarasota as an artists' colony," said Hartman.

"And Sarasota had it all," added Connor.

She and other members of the panel discussed the scenery, the light, the beaches, the fishing and the warm weather as factors that drew and kept many artists in this community — and gave them ample subject matter.

Connor continued, "In the late 1960s, the Sarasota Art Association was the venue for local artists to show their work and to sell their work, so in the late '60s, when non-representational art came in, most of the people — the local artists — that were trained or worked at Ringling were painting landscape and still life and portraiture in these shows. They weren't being picked anymore; the non-representational art was. So they weren't being promot-

ed by the association that they helped build. The popularity of non-representational art shifted everything."

Dean added, "The [Ringling] school started in 1931. [John] Ringling was going broke. Many teachers worked for a year-and-a-half with no pay. But we survived. The school was the first in Florida to take G.I. Bill students. When I started in 1985, we had 380 students, 28 faculty. We now have 150 faculty and 1,500 students and are a world-class institution."

Kipling mentioned that by the time she came to Sarasota, in the 1980s, a number of galleries had sprung up.

"My impression is that the galleries are not flourishing," she said. "What is it like now in the gallery scene and artists making a living here now?" she asked the panel.

Hartman responded that the downturn in the economy brought on by the Great Recession had been hard on galleries and artists. He noted, "There has been a devaluation of the worthiness of the visual arts. The demographics of a small town make it very difficult for young artists. I would say that the quality of art I'm framing is not the same as that from 35 years ago."

Dean added, "When I started writing for *The Longboat Observer*, there were eight or 10 viable galleries that did monthly shows, but they have just dissipated over the years. It seemed much more viable then. There are a number of reasons it is difficult in Sarasota. There is too much light here [causing artwork to suffer degradation], and many of the people [moving here] already collected art and if anything are getting rid of it now."



*Sarasota has become known for its Season of Sculpture show, held biennially on the bayfront along U.S. 41. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

“It’s tough to make a living anywhere for young artists,” Kipling said. “Sarasota used to be much less expensive to live in for young struggling artists.”

Then Hartman had a question: “I would be interested in knowing from Kevin how many students at Ringling are fine art students as opposed to digital and so on.”

“Fine arts is one of the smallest departments,” Dean said. “One thing is it is a much tougher sell. It is about \$120,000 to come to our school for four years. Illustration is by far the largest department.”

Connor pointed out, “There are three collections in this town, archived. If you wanted to do any further research on this topic, you could go to the Ringling Museum of Art, and the Sarasota County History Center has records and archives, and the Sarasota Art Association, if you wanted more information.”

Then Kipling changed the subject to the future. “The old [Sarasota] High School is going to be a new museum, hopefully,” referring to the plans for the Sarasota Museum of Art on North Tamiami Trail. The project is under the auspices of Ringling College of Art and Design.

According to the latest estimates, the fundraising is still millions of dollars from the point where work can begin in earnest on the museum.

Hartman jumped in. “I was one of the founders of the new museum at Sarasota High School, and even though there are people willing to donate, it is a challenge, the care and feeding of art and the \$22 million [that is] needed to be raised. The vision of the founders is such

that it is a very outward-looking institution and not so much focused on the artists of this community.”

He added, “I always felt that if we’d focused on this community a bit more, we might have seen more community buy-in. It would just make sense that as a part of the Ringling School, the local art would be preserved and displayed. The arts legacy of Sarasota will be gone otherwise. We need to preserve it while we still can.”

“When you don’t have a base collection, a core collection of local art, you become essentially just a booking hall,” Michael Solomon, son of well-known artist Syd Solomon, commented from his seat in the church pews.

“Instead of thinking either/or,” museums need to show works of local artists and book shows with national and international artists’ work, he added.

“And this is basically what most major museums do now,” Hartman noted.

Kipling concluded her questions of the panel by asking, “Talking about what it’s like for artists, what do you feel about media coverage for young artists in Sarasota?”

Hartman was quick to quip, “What media coverage?”

This series of lectures, *Conversations at the Crocker*, is sponsored by Sarasota Magazine and the Historical Society of Sarasota County.

The lectures are held in a church built by Peter Crocker in 1901. Crocker Church is located at 1260 12th St., in Pioneer Park, located just east of U.S. 41. 



*Spamalot will reign on the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall stage on Jan. 27. Photo by Scott Suchman*

## **SPAMALOT COMING TO SARASOTA JAN. 27**

“The British comedy geniuses of Monty Python created a masterpiece of hilarity when they filmed *Monty Python and The Holy Grail*, in 1975,” a Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall news release says. On Jan. 27, “the hysterical musical ‘lovingly ripped off from the motion picture’” — *Spamalot* — will make its way to the Van Wezel, the release adds.

The musical continues the parody of the tale of King Arthur’s quest for the Holy Grail. How-

ever, it also pokes fun at its Broadway peers, the release points out.

The show features all the quintessential characters from the film “and doesn’t skimp on the subtleties like killer rabbits, cows and of course, French people!” the release notes.

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$75. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org).

## HIGH SCHOOL JAZZ FESTIVAL RETURNS ON JAN. 25

The Jazz Club of Sarasota will host the High School Jazz Festival at 7 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 25, at Sarasota High School, 1000 S. School Ave., Sarasota, the club has announced.

The free concert will showcase the talents of musicians from Booker High School, Booker Junior High School, Sarasota High School, Riverview High School and Manatee High School, along with students in two bands from Lakewood Ranch High School, a news release says.

“Want to hear the future of jazz?” asks festival coordinator and Jazz Club of Sarasota board member Gordon Garrett in the release. “You’ll hear it at this concert. These incredibly talented students will amaze with their enthusiasm and chops. Your attendance supports the future of jazz.”

Garrett explains in the release that three professional musician mentors — Dick Hyman, George McLain and Henry Ettman — will work with each band onstage and offer suggestions on different ways to play the music. He adds that the festival was a major success when it started in 2008, but it was discontinued after two years because of a lack of funding.

“Sponsoring events like this is a big part of the Jazz Club of Sarasota’s mission,” says Garrett. “It’s a perfect fit with our scholarship program, which has presented thousands of dollars of scholarships to local young musicians over the past 15 years.”

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota or the festival, call 366-1552, or visit [www.jazzclubsarasota.org](http://www.jazzclubsarasota.org).

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## HANCOCK NAMED THE 2013 GREENFIELD PRIZE WINNER

The Hermitage Artist Retreat and the Greenfield Foundation have announced that painter Trenton Doyle Hancock is the winner of the \$30,000 Greenfield Prize, awarded this year in visual art.

Hancock was selected from a small group of finalists that included Nicole Eisenman, Maureen Gallace and Byron Kim, a news release says. The jury that selected Hancock included Dan Cameron, chief curator of the Orange County Museum of Art; Valerie Cassel Oliver, head curator of the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, and James Rondeau, chairman and Dittmer curator of the Department of Contemporary Art at The Art Institute of Chicago, the release adds.

The award will be presented to Hancock at a celebration dinner on Sunday, April 21, in The Francis Ballroom, 1289 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Jerry Saltz, senior art critic and columnist for *New York Magazine*, will be the keynote speaker.

“We congratulate Trenton Doyle Hancock and look forward to meeting him in April,” said Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage Artist Retreat, in the release. “The award presentation is the official kickoff for a two-year process in which he will create a new piece of art that eventually will be shared with art lovers across the country and around the world,” Rodgers added in the release.

“Bob Greenfield’s vision when he created the Greenfield Prize was to support individual artists in a way that would allow them to work unencumbered by boundaries and create meaningful work that impacts our society,” Rodgers continued. “We look forward to doing whatever we can to assist Trenton in fulfilling that goal.”

Hancock is an American painter whose work has been featured in exhibitions since before he even received his undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Fine Arts, from Texas A&M University in 1997, the release notes. He went on to get his Master of Fine Arts from Temple University in Philadelphia in 2000. Hancock’s work has been shown in both group and solo exhibitions around the United States and overseas since 1995, the release points out. He is represented by two galleries, James Cohan in New York City and Talley Dunn in Dallas, the release adds.

In addition to the Greenfield Prize, Hancock has been honored with the Joyce Alexander Wein Award from Studio Museum Harlem, the S.J. Wallace Truman Fund Prize from the National Academy Museum and the Penny McCall Foundation Award.

“I count it as a great honor to be a recipient of the Greenfield Prize and the Hermitage residency,” said Hancock in the release. “Lately, I’ve been wanting to explore some new and exciting avenues in my art. The Greenfield Prize will allow me the time, space and means to see these new ideas to fruition.”

The Greenfield Prize consists of a \$30,000 commission of an original work of art rotated



*Trenton Doyle Hancock/Contributed photo*

among three disciplines — visual art, drama and music; a six-week residency at the Hermitage; and a partnership with a professional arts organization to develop the work and assist in moving it forward into the American arts world, the release points out.

For more information on the Greenfield Prize, visit [www.greenfieldprize.org](http://www.greenfieldprize.org). For more information on the Hermitage Artist Retreat, visit [www.hermitage-fl.org](http://www.hermitage-fl.org).

## SARASOTA BALLET TO PRESENT ASHTON, CARTER & TUCKETT

The Sarasota Ballet will welcome the New Year with the presentation of its fourth program, *Ashton, Carter & Tuckett*, running Feb. 1-3 at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

Featuring performances created by the company's own Jamie Carter along with an original world-premiere ballet by choreographer Will Tuckett, "this memorable program will not only honor the talents of today but pay homage to the past," a news release says.

"With a special performance of Sir Frederick Ashton's *Birthday Offering*, in honor of Ulla Searing's 100th birthday, the Ballet will celebrate the many ways the philanthropist contributed to the arts organizations of Sarasota," the release adds.

*Birthday Offering*, "a stylish and ravishing ballet originally commissioned by Ashton for the 25th anniversary of The Royal Ballet, is a true showpiece that highlights a series of solos, duets and ensemble dances," the release notes.

"I brought this ballet to Sarasota for the main purpose of celebrating Ulla's birthday," says Iain Webb, director of The Sarasota Ballet, in the release. "Ulla was not only a supporter of

the ballet, but a dear friend and we greatly miss her."

"Even in her passing," the release adds, "Searing continues to help the company through her financial and artistic legacy."

While *Birthday Offering* honors the past, "the two succeeding ballets will remind audiences that the company has a bright future ahead," the release says. Originally titled, *Five Duets*, the second ballet, now titled *Between Longing and Yearning*, was choreographed by Carter, a coryphee member of The Sarasota Ballet. It had its premiere in 2011, the release notes. The ballet is set to the music of Bach's *Chaconne in D minor*.

Ending the program will be the world-premiere of a ballet created specifically for The Sarasota Ballet by Tuckett. Showcasing his theatrical side, "the never-before-performed ballet is set to a new piece of music composed by Jeremy Holland-Smith specifically for Tuckett's use," the release points out.

Tickets may be purchased [online](#) 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover. The box office may be contacted by calling 359-0099, Ext. 101.



Dancers of The Sarasota Ballet perform a scene from Jamie Carter's *Between Longing and Yearning*, part of the program for Feb. 1-3. Photo by Frank Atura

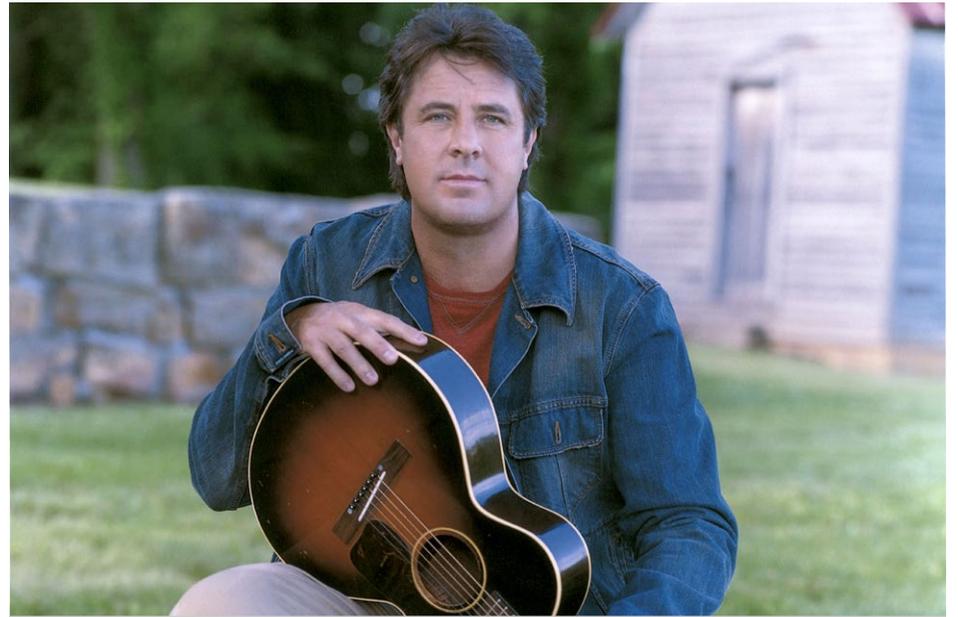
## VINCE GILL TO RETURN TO THE VAN WEZEL

Vince Gill will be returning to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall at 8 p.m. on Jan. 26, the hall has announced.

“A Sarasota favorite, Gill has been performing at the Van Wezel for many years, and he never ceases to pack the house,” a news release says.

A member of the Grand Ole Opry, Gill has 20 Grammys, 18 Country Music Association Awards and two Entertainer of the Year Awards, the release points out. “His musical prowess was highlighted on his 2006 album, *These Days*, which spanned multiple genres and featured a star-studded list of duets,” the release notes.

Gill is considered to be one of the greatest guitarists in country music, the release adds,



*Vince Gill/Contributed photo*

and “his undeniable talent as a musician and songwriter continues to be an inspiration to musicians and music lovers alike.”

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$75. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org).

## RIVERVIEW HIGH KILTIES ANNOUNCE ANNUAL SOUSA CONCERT

The Riverview High School Kiltie Band will perform the music of John Philip Sousa during its annual Sousa Concert on Friday, Feb. 1, the high school has announced.

The 90-minute show will begin at 7 p.m. at the Riverview Performing Arts Center.

“Known as the American March King, Sousa is considered by many to be America’s most beloved bandmaster,” a news release says. “His music has maintained enormous popularity over the generations since it was first written and performed in the late 19th century,” the release adds.

The Kilties will perform many of his best-known pieces, including *The Washington Post*, *King Cotton* and *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, the release notes.

“The Sousa Concert has been our most popular concert for many years,” said Mark Spreen, director of the Kiltie Band, in the release. “This show is probably our best of the year and is likely to attract music lovers of all ages,” he added.

As always, the Kilties will perform in their full Scottish attire, the release points out.

A \$5 donation will be collected at the door of the concert. Reserved seating for larger groups may be arranged by contacting Miriam Thompson at 539-5383 or [miriamdenver@netscape.net](mailto:miriamdenver@netscape.net).

Riverview High School is located at 1 Ram Way, Sarasota, off Proctor Road.

## **LET'S TWIST AGAIN'S RUN EXTENDED UNTIL FEB. 2**

Florida Studio Theatre once again has extended the run of its hit show, *Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers*, through Feb. 2, the theatre has announced.

"This is the longest running cabaret show in FST history," a news release says. "The '50s and '60s-style musical revue ... has kept the Goldstein Cabaret hopping since it opened on Oct. 19, the release adds.

*Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers* "features an all-male cast of performers who sing, dance and doo-wop their way through a multitude of popular songs," the release points out. Among those songs are *At the Hop*, *Barbara Ann*, *Do You Believe in Magic* and *At Last*.

Tickets may be purchased online at [Floridastudiotheatre.org](http://Floridastudiotheatre.org), by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the FST box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.



*Let's Twist Again: with the Wanderers* will continue into early next month at Florida Studio Theatre. Contributed photo

## WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER TO FEATURE WORKS BY BILLINGS

*Prolific and Eclectic*, “an impressive collection of Impressionist landscape and floral motifs by German-born artist Karin S. Billings,” will be on display from Feb. 7 through March 27 at The Women’s Resource Center, 340 S. Tuttle Ave, Sarasota, the center has announced.

A lover of animals and nature, Billings uses color, motif and technique to capture the variety and grandeur of flora from around the world and animals ranging from fish to horses, a news release says.

An artist reception and opening will be held Thursday, Feb. 7, from 5 to 7 p.m. The public is invited; refreshments will be served.

Billings’ art is an extension of her life experiences, the release notes. As a child, she was drawn to animals, specifically horses, the release notes. A highlight of her career with horses was at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, where she won a Silver Medal in dressage.

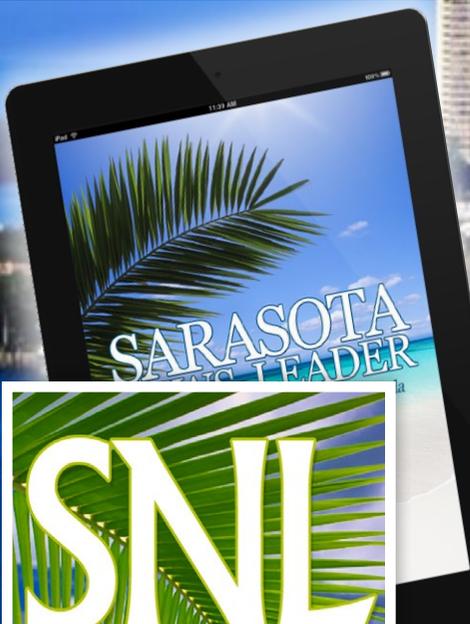


*Pegasus by artist Karin S. Billings. Contributed photo*

She is one of the few artists practicing Gyotaku, an oriental art form using an actual fish to create an ink image, the release points out. The prints are made by applying ink directly to the body of the specimen and then pressing oriental rice paper to capture the image.

For more information, call 366-1700.

# Enter To Win A New iPad



When our “Likes” on Facebook reach 1,000, we will randomly select one of our subscribers to receive a new iPad.

1

Click to Subscribe

2

Then Like Us On Facebook

The contest concludes when The Sarasota News Leader achieves 1,000 “Likes” on Facebook, One winner will be selected at random from among subscribers. Only subscribers are eligible to win the iPad, regardless of having “Liked” our page on Facebook. Contest is open only to residents of Sarasota County. Selected winners must provide a valid Sarasota County street address to receive the iPad. Contest is void where prohibited by law.

## DABBERT GALLERY PRESENTS *OLD FRIENDS, NEW PAINTINGS*

From Feb. 1-25, Dabbert Gallery, located at 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, will present *Old Friends, New Paintings*, featuring works by Craig Rubadoux and Robert Baxter.

An opening reception will be held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 1, the gallery has announced.

“Rubadoux mixes magnificent color harmonies with fluid lyrical line to create extraor-

dinary expressionistic works of art,” a news release says.

“Baxter’s sophisticated patterns of rich color create a milieu for the fascinating faces that populate his world of art,” the release adds.

For more information, email [dabbert@dabbertgallery.com](mailto:dabbert@dabbertgallery.com), visit [dabbertgallery.com](http://dabbertgallery.com) or call 955-1315. The gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

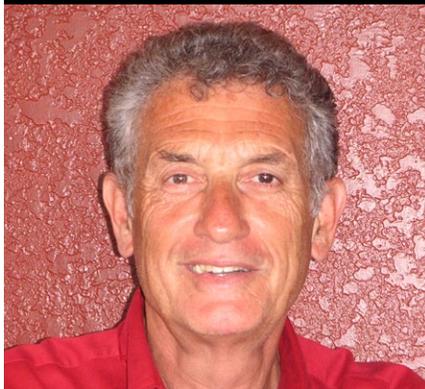


*Drift is by Craig Rubadoux. Contributed photo*



*Saint Armands is by Robert Baxter. Contributed photo*

## SARASOTA'S HAIR COLOR SPECIALIST



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John-Norman Tuck is Sarasota and Bradenton's premier hairstylist and hair color artist. Getting his customer's hair to look and feel it's best is his passion. John-Norman started fulfilling his customers' hair dreams in his Pasadena, CA salon and now has brought his talents to Sarasota.



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*The former commandant's villa stands empty on the site of the Plaszow concentration camp in Poland. The camp is part of the focus of a film about the Holocaust to be shown in Sarasota on March 4. Photo by Cancre/Wikipedia*

## CONGREGATION TO OFFER FILMS ON THE HOLOCAUST

*Extraordinary Holocaust Films*, a program presented by the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism and led by Irene Mirkovic, a Holocaust Museum docent and Lifelong Learning Academy instructor, will begin in early February and continue through early March, the Congregation has announced.

The following schedule has been set for the films:

- Feb. 4: *Out of the Ashes* — a made-for-TV docudrama that deals with the moral choices made by Dr. Gisella Perl, who was incarcerated in Auschwitz. Was she an angel or a Nazi collaborator?
- Feb. 18: *Berga: Soldiers of Another War* — a documentary that tells the true story of 350 American soldiers forced to profess their religious faith, some of whom were Gentiles who “looked Jewish.” These little known and long-forgotten American heroes showed acts of great courage and fellowship.

- Feb. 25: *Nicholas Winton: The Power of Good* — This recent documentary is the inspiring story of the 28-year-old British citizen who devised a daring rescue operation that saved 669 children during the Holocaust. This film won an International Emmy Award.
- March 4: *Inheritance* — A documentary that brings the issues of forgiveness and redemption to the fore. More than 60 years after World War II, Monica, the daughter of Amon Goeth (commandant of the Plaszow concentration camp) meets Helen, who was enslaved by Goeth as a child during the Holocaust. Each woman in her own way tries to face the nightmares that have haunted her for her entire life.

All the films will be shown at 1:30 p.m. at UNITY, 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota.

CHJ members will be admitted free; admission for non-members is \$5 per film.

For more information, call 929-7771 or visit [www.chj-sarasota.org](http://www.chj-sarasota.org).

## USF PROFESSOR TO PRESENT PROGRAM ON AGING

Associate Professor Kathy Black will present a program titled, *Aging in Community*, on Feb. 1 at 10 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

Black “knows how to organize and mobilize community action to support seniors who want to maintain their dignity and independence,” a news release says.

Her program will inform community groups and families looking for ways to assist seniors, including remarks about public, private and nonprofit organizations that work with seniors, the release notes.

Black holds a doctorate in social welfare and teaches at the University of South Florida

Sarasota-Manatee. Her recent research on the topic of aging was published in the November 2012 issue of *Journal of Applied Gerontology*.

Her talk is open to the public at no cost.

The presentation is sponsored by the Free-thinkers Forum, created in 2007 to stimulate discussion on a wide range of issues affecting religion, morality, justice and ethics in society, the release says. The Forum meets on the first Friday of every month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota.

For more information call 371-4974 or visit [www.uusarasota.org](http://www.uusarasota.org).

Earlier forums may be found online at [www.uusarasota.com/freespeakers](http://www.uusarasota.com/freespeakers).

## FIRST CHURCH WELCOMES THE PUBLIC TO EXPERIENCE *THE STORY*

First United Methodist Church, located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota, invites members of the community to experience *The Story*, which will be the focus of Sunday worship during Lent.

“*The Story* makes the individual stories, people and places of the Bible accessible by

demonstrating how the story of Scripture intersects with the story of your life,” a church news release says.

Sunday services are at 8:30, 9:30 and 11 a.m. The first Sunday in Lent is Feb. 17.

For additional information, call the church office at 955-0935. 

## QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

**25**  
JAN

**WSLR presents Hardin Burns and Rebekah Pulley**

Jan. 25, 8 p.m.; Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door; [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

**29**  
JAN

**Organist Kent Tritle in Concert**

Jan. 29, 7 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple Ave. Admission: \$10. Information: 955-0935 or [www.firstsrq.com](http://www.firstsrq.com).

**01**  
FEB

**Jazz Club of Sarasota presents *Skip Conkling's Dixie Mix***

Feb. 1, 2 to 4 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road. Tickets: \$7 for members/\$12 for non-members. Information: 366-1552 or [jazzclubsarasota.org](http://jazzclubsarasota.org).

**01**  
FEB

***Old Friends, New Paintings* — a show featuring artists Craig Rubadoux and Robert Baxter**

Feb. 1, 6 to 8:30 p.m., opening reception at the Dabbert Gallery, 76 S. Palm Ave.; free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**02+**  
FEB

***FST Improv***

Feb. 2 & 8, 8:30 p.m.; Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Admission: \$12. Information: 366-9000 or [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org).

To get all the details on these and other great activities — food, nightlife, music, art, theater, children's events, learning opportunities and more — go to Sarasota's No. 1 source for local events, hot spots, fun activities and hidden gems:



thisweekin  
**SARASOTA.com**  
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

# MARY'S CHAPEL: OH, SO PEACEFUL

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

Issued 04/01/2012

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## SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

*Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches Sarasota County for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.*